

COMMONWEAL

KEEP YOUR PRAYERS TO YOURSELF?

Public space & personal piety

R. BRUCE DOUGLASS

THE WATER IS DEEP

Making your way through
Iris Murdoch's fiction

MADELINE MARGET

PATRICK WHITE on the West Bank

PATRICK BARNARD
on questions for Mr. Gates

J. BRYAN HEHIR on 'Centesimus annus'

BOOKS:

EDWARD T. WHEELER on Dickens
JOHN P. HOGAN on Jean-Bertrand Aristide
DAVID CASTRONOVO on Naguib Mahfouz
HOWARD SPIRO on medicine & ethics

CORRESPONDENCE

Novak on capitalism

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Mel Piehl made many interesting and important points in his article ["A Wealth of Notions," May 3] on *Rerum novarum* and its offspring in America. Alas, however, he made three mistakes in his description of the lay letter *Toward the Future*, produced by the lay commission chaired by William E. Simon and myself.

In the first place, the lay letter was not exactly a "response" to the bishops' pastoral letter, since in fact we wrote and published it before we ever saw a copy of the bishops' first draft. Second, like other examples of Catholic social thought, we also rejected "unregulated Friedmannesque capitalism" several times in our letter. For example: "The very concept of political economy implies that the economic system of democratic capitalism does not stand by itself. The American system is not a free market system alone, or a free enterprise system alone. The political system has many wholly legitimate and important economic roles, including care for the truly needy. To the one side we reject statist views which would swallow all of life under state control. To the other, we reject libertarian visions of an 'unfettered' economic system which would measure all matters merely in their economic aspects.

"No economic system can pretend to do everything sufficient for a good society; many human requirements must be met outside and beyond it. The young, the elderly, the disabled, those visited by sudden misfortune, and many others are permanently or for a time unable to work. In a good society, the moral system and the political system must come to the assistance of such persons in ways that the economic system alone cannot."

There are many other passages exactly like that, both in the lay letter and in all my own writings.

Third, we of course recognize that many learned experts argue for more of the "state-regulated welfare" that we argue against, but we believe that that argument is per-

fectly legitimate, and that the outcome should be left to legitimate moral inquiry and democratic debate.

By the time Professor Piehl's article appeared, Mr. Simon and I thought that Pope John Paul II's new encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, reflected the argument of the lay letter, in substance and in tone, even in many specifics, especially those on family and welfare, creativity, enterprise, and "capitalism" or "the free economy." We think it is a great encyclical.

MICHAEL NOVAK

The author replies:

If not "exactly" a response to the bishops, *Toward the Future* was substantially so, since it was issued shortly before the first draft of the pastoral with the plain intent of preemptively countering its widely expected emphases. The passage Mr. Novak here quotes from the "lay letter" mentions only the one minimal welfare function of "care for the truly needy" as a state responsibility, and then restricts the truly needy to those "unable to work" (thus presumably excluding the structurally unemployed). Neither in *Toward the Future* nor in Mr. Novak's *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* is there any positive endorsement of substantive regulation of capitalism in such areas as working conditions, minimum wages and maximum hours, environment, safety, health, labor unions, securities and commodities markets, and the like. It is this regulation, beginning in the Progressive Era, that partially tempered and humanized American capitalism (and, incidentally, made it more politically acceptable to the public). The argument of *Toward the Future* points in the opposite direction: toward restoring unregulated capitalism. Some of Mr. Novak's earlier writings did speak favorably of labor unions, but I am not sure how strongly he and Mr. Simon now support strict enforcement of the National Labor Relations Act and similar laws.

Economic expertise is useful within its sphere. But my article also suggested that

the resolution of crucial economic issues depends on moral choices of social values that transcend economics. Despite their varying emphases, that appears to be a bedrock principle of all the social encyclicals, including *Centesimus annus*.

MEL PIEHL

Catholics CAN chant

Clayton, Mo.

To the Editors: Thanks for printing Marian Burkhart's postscript [Correspondence, May 3] to the earlier discussion of Thomas Day's *Why Catholics Can't Sing*. Here's a post-postscript.

Ms. Burkhart is right (and so was Day's book; cf. pp. 103-107) about the power of Gregorian to "connect" the people of a parish. Motivating congregational participation is also the reason more and more cathedral parishes in the U.S. have begun a chant Mass, usually at 9 o'clock on Sundays. The most recent newcomer, St. Mary's in San Francisco, features a Latin Mass every Sunday and offers weekday conferences on the upcoming Sunday liturgy; they are popular even among those who attend other Masses. (The new pastor is a friend of Solesmes abbey, of which I am an oblate.)

To provide for such projects and encourage
(Continued on page 413)

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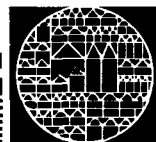
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COMMONWEAL



Answering the call

After joining an all-volunteer army and taking advantage of its benefits, can a soldier refuse to fight? Isn't that like: "take the money and run"? But if that is the case, can a soldier never change his or her mind about fighting, even for conscience sake?

Army Capt. David Wiggins, a West Point distinguished graduate (1984) and a U.S. Army doctor, applied for a conscientious objector discharge in February 1990, six months before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. He told the Army at Fort Hood, Texas, that at twenty-seven, "I finally realized the truth: War, the intentional slaughter of innocent human life, is unchristian and immoral by any standard." He asked to be discharged, and he volunteered to repay his debt for his education either monetarily or through service in the Peace Corps. In the normal course of military routine, his request would have been ruled on by May 1990. Instead, it was delayed, and after the invasion of Kuwait the Army's Conscientious Objector Review Board ruled against Wiggins. Despite testimony to the contrary from its own investigating officers, the board declared that Wiggins's beliefs were political rather than moral.

In September, the Pentagon suddenly announced that it was refusing to process all CO claims until applicants had been deployed to the Gulf. Both U.S. civil law and the Uniform Code of Military Justice recognize the right of military personnel to conscientious objector status. By requiring applicants to deploy to the Gulf, the armed forces were making sure prospective COs would have little access to lawyers, counselors, or witnesses; some, protesting this policy, arrived in chains.

When Dr. Wiggins landed in Saudi Arabia in December, he again refused to take up his duties but offered to work for the International Red Cross in Saudi Arabia or to help care for P.O.W.s inside Iraq. The Army refused his requests and Wiggins was imprisoned after he publicly stripped himself of his uniform. In April 1991 he was court-martialed, fined \$25,000, and dismissed from the Army. He was grateful: He could have gone to prison for five-and-a-half years. Despite the verdict, it is clear from reading Wiggins's testimony that he arrived at a bona fide moral conviction against all war while serving in the Army, and that he was willing to pay up personally.

There were other service objectors to the Gulf War, but they did not come to their position in advance of the conflict. Their moral awakening coincided with the onset of the war. While at another time they might easily have qualified as COs (each year, the armed forces recognize and honorably discharge about two-hundred-and-fifty conscientious objectors), in the midst of war they have had to overcome an understandable skepticism. Yet, as most adults know, moral clarity often comes only at the moment when situation and principle actually join. As a result of the Gulf War, more than one hundred and fifty military COs have been or are now being prosecuted for refusing duty. (According to Pax Christi USA, the armed forces

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have applied a different standard of punishment to COs than to those who went AWOL simply to avoid duty. The latter have been meted out administrative punishments that, in most cases, amount to less than one year in prison and do not include dishonorable discharges; COs have gotten dishonorable discharges and prison sentences of up to twenty-five months.)

But not everyone who objected was a pacifist. Some objectors came to conclude that the Gulf War was the wrong war for the wrong reasons at the wrong time. As selective COs, they face even stronger skepticism from the military. For that reason, they have been advised by legal counsel to present their decision to refuse orders in terms of traditional pacifism rather than "selective conscientious objection." They are well advised to do so. In 1971 the Supreme Court ruled that a congressional determination not to exempt selective conscientious objectors from the draft was constitutional.

In 1968 the Catholic bishops of the United States, however, in keeping with the church's just-war teaching, had recommended that the Selective Service Act then in force be modified to recognize selective conscientious objectors (those, who while not absolute pacifists, had concluded that a specific war was unjust, or who, because of the indiscriminate nature of certain modern weapons systems, had moral reservations about participating in military actions). In lieu of military duty, the bishops suggested that some other form of alternative service be required. Congress, unwilling to address the matter during the Vietnam War, did not act on the bishops' request, and eventually the draft itself was replaced by the all-volunteer army. In 1980, however, the U.S. Catholic Conference took up the issue again and published a "Statement on Registration and Conscription for Military Service." The bishops' position on selective conscientious objection, they wrote, had "not yet found expression in our legal system, but a means should be found to give this legitimate moral position a secure legal status." With the Gulf War, the need for such a designation became even clearer.

Thus, in an April 25, 1991, letter to President George Bush—who had argued that the Gulf War was "just" by just-war standards—thirty-three Catholic bishops asked the president

In keeping with *Commonweal's* usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated July 12.

to provide legal recognition of selective conscientious objection based on the just-war teaching. Logic would hold that if the nations leaders accept the just-war theory as a standard for determining the legitimacy of particular wars—as the president did in this case—individuals who do not believe the war meets those standards should have the right to refuse a call to serve. In fact, morally, they would be obliged to do so.

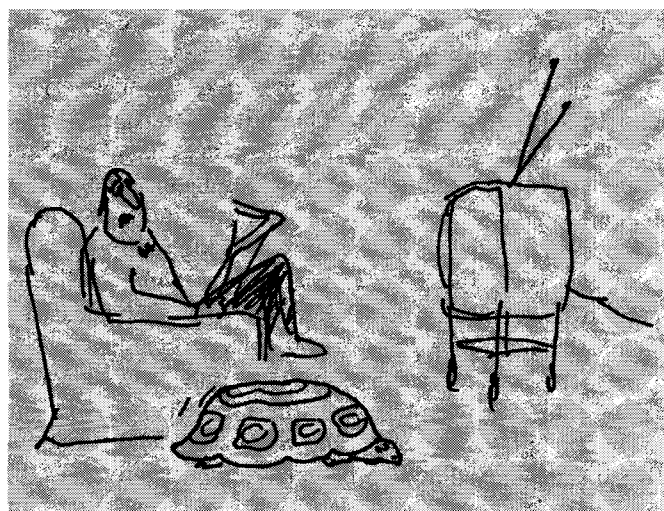
In their 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, the U.S. bishops wrote that in light of the new character of modern warfare, it is necessary "to undertake a completely fresh appraisal of war." That appraisal is one we must all make. Legally, the right to refuse to participate in a particular war because it has failed just-war tenets should be codified in U.S. civil and military law, even for an "all-volunteer" army. Congress could augment the present formulation for conscientious objector status from merely those who oppose "war in any form" to include those opposed to war "in a particular form." It could also mandate that those seeking CO or SCO status perform alternative service, perhaps of greater duration or at less pay, making such service less inviting to the insincere.

Constitutionally, it will always remain the government's prerogative and duty to raise and maintain armies. Nonetheless, respect for individual conscience and belief is at the heart of our First Amendment rights and freedoms. If our laws don't respect such principles, in the final analysis, what is it we are fighting for?

CROSSING THE LINE

What a contrast there is between Israel's policy of marginalizing the Palestinians in their own land and the heartfelt welcome they have given the Ethiopian Jews. With the Ethiopians, Israel is at its generous, persistent, heroic best. The first groups of Ethiopian Jews were welcomed in 1984; Israel has waited and worked through famine and revolution to insure the departure of those who remained in Ethiopia. In a matter of some thirty-six hours on May 24-25, over 14,000 of their long-lost (since perhaps, 1000 B.C.) brothers and sisters were flown from war-racked Addis Abba to an ecstatic welcome at Lod Airport.

This sense of generosity disappears at the Green Line, as Secretary of State James Baker had reason to lament in testimony before Congress on May 23. "Every time I have gone to Israel in connection with the peace process, I have been met with the announcement of new settlement activity. Nothing has made my job of trying to find Arab and Palestinian partners for Israel more difficult than being greeted by a new settlement every time I arrive."



"Stay"

Secretary Baker's observation, offered in response to a question from Representative David Obey (D-Wis.), caused a storm in Congress. Israeli government officials and American Jewish organizations quickly joined in. But who better than Mr. Baker is able to calibrate the importance of each of the many obstacles to peace he has encountered over the last two months in the Middle East? Though serious obstacles come from the Arab side as well, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the increase of land seizures in the occupied territories and the growth of the Israeli settlements are meant to derail the secretary's negotiation efforts (see Patrick White's article, pp. 390-91). Mr. Ariel Sharon, minister of housing, has been quite clear about that. Other ministers in the Likud government, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, may stand back from Mr. Sharon's blatant provocations but they do not disagree with the policy. The settlements are an effort to create a de facto and permanent Israeli presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Quite apart from the current efforts to negotiate a breakthrough, the settlements are counter to long-standing American policy, a fact barely discernible in congressional reaction to Mr. Baker's words. The intransigence of the Likud government is compounded by members of the Congress mortgaged to American supporters of Israel. The liens on so many members blind them not only to U.S. interests in the Middle East, but ultimately to Israel's as well. U.S. support for Israel has been reliable and consistent in word and deed; it is a policy we support. But it is a wholly other and contradictory policy for the United States to acquiesce in the continuing settlement of the occupied territories. When the settlements now serve as a critical barrier to peace negotiations, Mr. Baker is right to object as strenuously and pointedly as he has.

Though significant numbers of Israelis object to the settlement activities, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the settlement movement and the Likud government are increasingly fixed on a policy that will lead eventually to annexation of the West Bank, and the expulsion of most of its Palestinian inhabitants through police action or economic strangulation. An Israel that does this—slowly or swiftly, in stages or all at once—is an Israel that the United States should not support.

QUESTIONS FOR MR. GATES

WHAT DID YOU KNOW? AND WHEN DID YOU KNOW IT?

President George Bush's nomination of Robert M. Gates to replace the outgoing William Webster as director of the CIA has prompted justified concern in Congress. At his coming confirmation hearings, some legislators plan to press Gates about his conduct during the Iran-*contra* scandal.

There are, however, other equally important questions that should be put to Gates, all of them linked to his involvement

in the Bush administration's policy toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq before and after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Since Washington's Iraq policy was deeply flawed, these queries raise the very real issue of whether it is wise to make Gates the head of the CIA. They stem from five specific aspects of the connections between the U.S. and Baghdad:

1. *William Casey's secret trip to Baghdad in 1982.* In January 1982, the then director of the CIA, William Casey, appointed Robert Gates Deputy Director for Intelligence, the top analyst's post and a prize plum for the Casey protégé. Some eight weeks later, Casey made a secret trip to Baghdad and arranged the *quid pro quo* which allowed Iraq to be removed from the State Department's list of states supporting terrorism, a prerequisite for the subsequent resumption of diplomatic relations in November 1984.

Question: Did Robert Gates know about Casey's visit or help to prepare it?

2. *The funding of Iraq's arms procurement network via a branch of Italy's Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in Atlanta, Georgia.* Beginning in 1983 and 1984, the Reagan administration facilitated the trans-shipment of U.S. military goods to Iraq via Egypt, Kuwait, and Jordan. Washington also shared command-and-control intelligence with Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq war, encouraged the granting of U.S. agricultural loans to Baghdad through the government's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), and licensed the export of sensitive dual-use technology to Iraq.

From 1985-1989, Baghdad, for its part, employed the Atlanta, Georgia, branch of the state-owned Italian bank, the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro* (BNL), to channel more than \$4 billion of weaponry from the U.S. and Europe to Iraq's military-industrial complex. These contracts brokered by BNL-Atlanta supplied electronic components for Iraqi missiles, barrels for special artillery, material to help make nerve and mustard gas, and computers for guidance systems.

Within Baghdad's global and secret arms network, the highly specialized U.S. dealings, managed by BNL-Atlanta, took \$1.9 billion of American taxpayers' funds from the CCC to aid procurement. Representative Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.), chairman of the House Banking Committee, claims that Italian officials of BNL have confirmed to him that "the CIA was involved in the concession of loans by BNL to Iraq."

Question: Since Robert Gates was approved as deputy director of the CIA in April of 1986, during the period of activity by the Georgia branch of BNL, can Gates either deny or confirm that BNL-Atlanta was part of a CIA-aided operation? If not, can Gates explain why the CIA did not know more about the three thousand telexes sent from the obscure Georgia bank to major institutions in Iraq?

3. *The veto by Robert Gates in June 1990 of tighter controls on missile technology exports from the U.S. to Iraq.* During the Bush administration, Robert Gates moved from CIA to become deputy national security adviser under Brent Scowcroft.

Throughout the beginning of 1990, Commerce Department officials—led by the Under Secretary for Export Administration, Dennis E. Kloske—argued in April, May, and June for much tighter controls on U.S. high-technology exports which were

obviously being used as part of Iraq's domestic missile program. On June 8, 1990, Kłoske sent a proposal directly to Robert Gates, outlining the expanded application of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) to exports destined for Iraq. MTCR is a strict monitoring system aimed at countries with the potential of developing nuclear missiles. Robert Gates flatly turned down the Commerce Department proposal, even after Saddam Hussein, in a televised speech on April 2, 1990, threatened "to make the fire eat up half of Israel."

Question: Why did Robert Gates reject the rational demand for control of dangerous technology exports? Was he obeying orders from above, and from whom did they come? Was he compelled to preserve an ongoing connection with Baghdad that began in 1982 with the secret Casey visit?

4. *The refusal by the National Security Council in December 1990 and January 1991 to crack down on trans-shipments of U.S. military goods to Iraq via Jordan, shipments which were in contravention of the UN embargo.* Robert Gates received intelligence advice in December 1990 that consignments of military goods from U.S. companies were being trans-shipped to Iraq via Jordan. During both December 1990 and January 1991, on the very eve of the Gulf conflict, the Bush administration decided not to prevent shipments to Jordan.

Question: Since Robert Gates knew about this movement of goods, why did he not act to enforce the UN embargo?

5. *Advance warnings about Iran-contra and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.* An official named Charles Eugene Allen works as the national intelligence officer for warning at the CIA. He is a professional trouble-shooter whose job is to raise alarms within the national security community about political emergencies around the world.

On October 1, 1986, Allen, while working as an intelligence chief on a classified CIA project, personally informed Robert Gates (then deputy director) that money from arms sales to Iran had been diverted to finance the *contras* in Nicaragua. Allen specifically told Gates about the actions of Oliver North. Yet, when Gates helped William Casey prepare testimony for delivery

before the House and Senate Intelligence committees, on November, 21, 1986, Gates apparently did nothing to alter Casey's misleading assertions about Iran-*contra*.

Four years later, in July 1990, Charles Allen reportedly issued three warnings that Iraq would invade Kuwait, and his first alarm was issued at the beginning of the month. The situation was strikingly similar to the one during Iran-*contra*. Gates knew all about Allen, and his proven reputation for stumbling on remarkably accurate information. Yet Allen's warnings about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait were apparently shunted aside in July 1990.

Question: Did Robert Gates know about the Allen warnings in July 1990, and did he play any role in down-playing their significance?

The confirmation hearings for the Gates appointment are important for two reasons. First, Gates was both a professional at the CIA and a member of the Casey team. The public must ask themselves if they wish the CIA to continue the Casey tradition, in any form whatsoever. Second, questions about Gates's decisions concerning Iraq provide a unique opportunity to clarify the historical record, and the means, perhaps, for the U.S. to chart a more secure course in the Middle East.

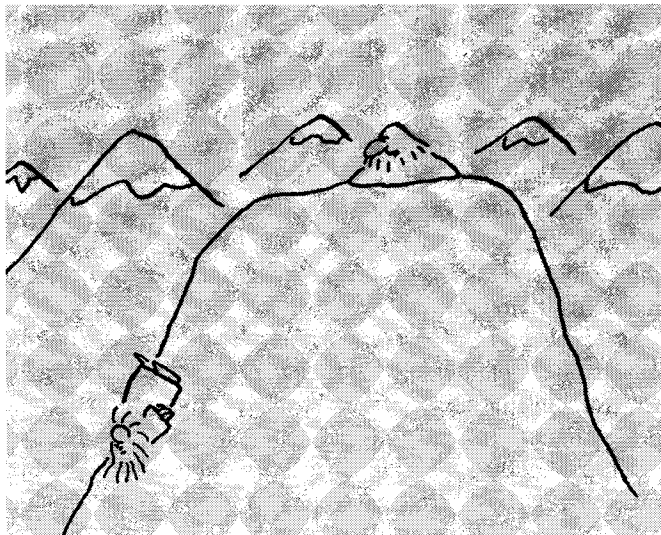
PATRICK BARNARD

Patrick Barnard is a Canadian journalist specializing in international affairs. He has contributed to the Nation and Newsday.

IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

MAKING FACTS, NOT PEACE WHOSE LAND? WHOSE WATER?

Open your eyes
Give me some of your care, some affair,
Pick yourself out of the silence;
The wall still stands
And the heart is full of sadness.



"Don't feel bad—We all have to learn from our mistakes."

This poetry is not in any way exceptional. But the writer, Taha Qarageh, a Muslim Palestinian student at Bethlehem University, should be heard for there is reason why he is desperate and deeply distressed as he suffers yet another four-day, twenty-four-hour curfew at Deheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem.

What is the new world order for Taha Qarageh? The Gulf War is over but the situation in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza has deteriorated and the catastrophe of the Palestinian people continues.

At the time of Secretary of State James Baker's visits round the Middle East in March and April, and in particular, on the occasions of his stays in Israel, significant changes continued to take place in the occupied territories. First, there has been an acceleration in the illegal confiscation of Palestinian land to

create new Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The ad hoc committee of international NGOs reports that 70,000 dunums of land (1 dunum=1,000 square meters) were expropriated in the period between Mr. Baker's first and second visits. This seems to be part of a deliberate policy by the Israelis to "create facts on the ground" and to disrupt further any chances of a just peace process. Of the portion of the original land of Palestine left to the Palestinians in 1948, over 60 percent of the West Bank and 40 percent of the Gaza strip have now been confiscated by the Israeli occupying power in defiance of international law and UN resolutions.

Knock at the door
Open your eyes,
Voices call you every day
Don't turn your face away.
Don't hold your emotions inside your heart;
Why does ignorance still hold sway?

Concurrent with this rapid confiscation of the land in the occupied territories has been the continued establishment and enlargement of Jewish settlement on Arab land. From the shambles of Deheisheh Refugee Camp, Taha can see evidence of this with the increasing number of Jewish settlers' cars speeding on the Hebron road as the settlers' population continues to grow. There are now 90,000 Jewish settlers on the West Bank, 3,500 in the Gaza Strip, 110,000 in East Jerusalem, and 25,000 on the Golan Heights. At the same time that brand-new houses for settlers are built on confiscated land, Palestinians are unable to obtain licenses to build their own homes.

Since the Gulf War, sixty-nine Palestinian homes have been demolished and eighteen sealed by the Israeli military authorities under the questionable charge that their owners lacked licenses to build them. Meanwhile hundreds of Palestinians remain in the squalor of refugee camps, many since 1948, with little hope of obtaining respectable homes. Israeli Government officials announced that 250,000 new homes will be built in the occupied territories within the next two years, some of these houses with money promised by the United States government.

The de-Arabisation of the occupied territories involves not only the confiscation of the land and its settlement by Israelis, but also the expropriation of related resources. Very limited water reserves are of vital importance in this arid land, particularly as increasing demands are being made on them. To date 80 percent of the West Bank's water is used by the Israelis and the Jewish settlers. In the Gaza Strip where there are nearly 700,000 Palestinians, the average Palestinian consumes only 1 percent of the water used by the average Jewish settler. Israeli control of all the natural resources of the occupied territories through the illegal imposition of 2,000 military orders is accelerating, particularly as the number of Russian immigrants grows. Arbitrary control over the drilling and distribution of water by Israel has retarded Palestinian agricultural development and hydrologists estimate that 60 percent of the Palestinian villages are without local sources of water.

Knock at the door, open your eyes.

Is there more breathing room for you, for me, for all?
This is my heartfelt message
Life is not goods to sell,
Life is dignity, freedom, and soul.

Stripped of their patrimony, Palestinians are forced to leave the rural regions to find jobs in the urban areas already over-supplied with workers. Work opportunities in Israel itself have markedly declined as the Russian immigrants have taken over the jobs Palestinians used to fill. But this is not all. During and since the Gulf War, the Israeli military authorities have prevented Palestinians from going to work and hindered their farmers and industrialists from moving raw materials and finished products to and from their usual markets. No one of working age in Taha's family is employed; they are among the 50 percent unemployed in the occupied territories as a whole since the Gulf War.

Television cameras at the numerous road blocks should film the indignities inflicted by the Israeli army each day on the thousands of Palestinians desperately trying to get to work, to school, to go about the normal business of living. Though our university in Bethlehem is open, only 70 percent of the students can reach us and some of those only with great difficulty. Students with authorized permits tell me that soldiers confiscate them and proceed to tear up the cards or throw them away. Meanwhile four of the other Palestinian universities remain closed.

Knock at the door, open your eyes,
There is a rose waiting, a rose,
Is the door still closed?

Will Mr. Baker be able to prize open the door? An American Franciscan friend of mine who lives and works at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem was taken by surprise recently as he played the organ in St. Catherine's Church: one of his confreres called him saying the Israelis were at the entrance of the church and wanted to see him. On the porch an Israeli secret service man informed him that Mr. Baker would make a lightning visit to the basilica that evening; he would be arriving in thirty minutes. Could he, an American friar, show Mr. Baker around? Later, when the secretary of state arrived, the American Franciscan read with him the nativity passage from St. Luke's Gospel in the grotto of the Nativity. The scores of attendant soldiers and agents were outside the small place and out of earshot. In reading the passage the friar emphasized the words "peace on earth." Mr. Baker was quick to notice this and remarked that the Franciscan's prayers would do more than his own efforts in reaching a peace in the Middle East. Mr. Baker, my friend informed me, looked haggard and tired. He had just spent the day with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel.

Please open the door so we can live;
Let us tread the new road of peace
A new world awaits.

PATRICK WHITE

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A WASTE OF TIME?

THE ORTHODOX & THE WCC

The World Council of Churches was, until the Second Vatican Council, the most famous and visible symbol of ecumenism. It was never without controversy, and its tendency in recent years to respond somewhat predictably to the latest trends in liberal politics has brought it a share of ridicule. But the WCC has been, and continues to be, an important sign and source of hope for Christian unity. Member churches include Protestant denominations of almost every variety, as well as most of the world's Orthodox churches. Though the Roman Catholic church is not a member, Catholics serve on WCC commissions. As with the United Nations, it is easy to see the WCC as a largely ineffectual grouping; but like the United Nations, the WCC offers an important forum, a way of taking the pulse of a larger community—in this case that of Christian churches, rather than nations.

In February of this year the WCC held its Seventh Annual Assembly in Canberra, Australia. (The first was held at Amsterdam, in 1948.) A couple of events there revealed problems that must be dealt with at some point in the relatively near future, if the WCC is to survive in anything like its present form, and they reveal deeper divisions in the whole of the Christian world. Some observers have suggested that these problems show why the ecumenical enterprise is doomed from the start; others would argue that their emergence as points of controversy and potential dialogue are strong arguments in favor of ecumenism.

The WCC Canberra Assembly dealt with a number of predictable issues and administrative concerns, issuing statements on the Gulf War, conflicts within and between nations, and the WCC's own financial difficulties. What attracted most press attention was a presentation by Korean Presbyterian theologian, Dr. Chung

Hyun Kyung; her combination of dance and text identified the Holy Spirit with the spirits of ancestors and the spirits of nature. This was done in part as a rejection of "Eurocentric" approaches to Christian tradition. Many delegates thought it a wonderful presentation, but others (the Orthodox particularly) found it deeply problematic.

Another point of division between the Orthodox and Protestant delegates involved the Eucharist. Although many Orthodox delegates attended an ecumenical eucharistic service, they did not take the bread and wine, and held their own eucharistic liturgy separately at which other delegates were present, but were not able to receive Communion. This was criticized by many of the Protestant delegates.

As a result of all this, the Orthodox delegates felt it necessary to issue a statement on Orthodox participation in the WCC. Among other things, the delegates commented on Dr. Chung's presentation: "We must guard against a tendency to substitute a 'private' spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits for the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. Our tradition is rich in respect for local and national cultures, but we find it impossible to invoke the spirits of 'earth, air, water, and sea creatures.'" With regard to intercommunion, the Orthodox wrote, "For the Orthodox, the Eucharist is the supreme expression of unity and not a means toward unity. The present situation in the ecumenical movement is for us an experience of the cross of Christian division." The Orthodox asked whether it was time for Orthodox and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council of Churches, and scheduled a meeting of Orthodox churches to discuss the issue.

The participation of the Orthodox in the WCC has always been qualified:

Orthodoxy considers itself to be the apostolic church. Though committed to a search for Christian unity, Orthodoxy does not accept the common WCC belief that there is a larger church of which Orthodoxy forms a smaller component, searching for a unity yet to be achieved. The fullness of Christianity is already found in Orthodoxy, in the opinion of the Orthodox member churches. This is obviously at variance with the opinion of other WCC members, many of whom are bothered by the Orthodox refusal to participate in their liturgies, and the refusal of the Orthodox to admit them to Communion. They regard this as mere triumphalism.

The reaction to Dr. Chung's presentation reveals something more profound in the division between the Orthodox and many WCC participants, however. The questions raised at Canberra go to the heart of ecclesiology, and reflect differences between Christians which extend beyond the membership of the WCC.

Those who find Dr. Chung's approach to theology fresh and exciting tend to regard the Christian religion as a set of metaphors without specific content, which may be used creatively to underscore a point of view held strongly by an individual or group. It doesn't matter, from this perspective, that the Holy Spirit has not traditionally been identified with the spirits of nature or the spirits of ancestors; tradition itself is seen as a confining and limited thing (except, perhaps, when it is non-European and non-Western). For a similar reason, the denial of open Communion to all is an unfair exclusion from what is, finally, only another metaphor...a metaphor central to Christians, the symbolic affirmation of our unity.

For the Orthodox, however, tradition is the way the church discerns the way God has worked and is working among us; it is not something we can stand apart from, reinterpreting it as the moment's urgent needs make their claims on us. It is the light by which we try to see and interpret the present. The Eucharist is not a metaphor for a desired unity but the expression of a present unity—which plainly does not exist—in the Body of Christ, who is truly present among us eucharistically.

There are different ecclesiologies at work here: one, generally individualistic,

though attentive to communal concerns, sees the church as the collection of individuals who are committed to the following of Christ. But how one interprets Christ and the Holy Spirit and their relationship to the Father is an open-ended question, because no one can claim to have a finally appropriate view of God. Even referring to God as "Father" and baptizing in the traditional trinitarian way is rejected by some Protestants (there are churches where baptisms are performed with words like "parent" and "child" substituted for "Father" and "Son"), because these are seen as culturally limited metaphors. The danger here—apart from what seems to me to be an absolutely inadequate ecclesiology—is that the church does little more than reflect, in a vaguely religious way, the concerns and passions of whatever cultural assumptions dominate its members.

The other ecclesiology is centered on the belief that the Holy Spirit guides the vision of the church, seen as the Body of Christ, the presence of Christ in the world; what has become part of the church's practice is the result of the community's discernment, a discernment in which the Holy Spirit is present. The language used traditionally by the church is considered appropriate—it would not have been received into the tradition if it were not. It is considered a betrayal of a God-given heritage to reject that language for reasons which are essentially political. The real question about intercommunion under these circumstances is not whether it can be done, or should be, but what it means. Where there is no real Communion, a celebration of the Lord's supper becomes merely symbolic—which may not be a problem for someone from the Reformed tradition, but definitely would be for someone Orthodox or Roman Catholic.

The differences are profound, and they have led a lot of Orthodox to think of the ecumenical movement as a waste of time. It isn't. Looking at it selfishly, it has been good for the Orthodox. Meetings of the WCC have brought them together from all parts of the world, and the meetings have borne fruit. Recently, representatives of the Oriental Orthodox (that is, the non-Chalcedonian churches of Armenia, Syria, and Malabar, and the Coptic churches of Egypt and Ethiopia) and the Eastern

Orthodox churches concluded that they now have no theological differences which stand as barriers to communion; they are presently trying to work out a complete restoration of communion between their churches. This would probably not have happened if it were not for the WCC.

Looked at as part of the larger ecumenical picture, it would be a betrayal of Christian charity if the Orthodox churches abandoned the WCC because of these frustrations. It is important for many other members (quite a few of them are more sympathetic to the Orthodox position than to the free-wheeling extremes that oppose it) that the Orthodox remain.

At the same time, it is important to realize that we are at a crucial moment in the relationships among churches. An

Orthodox delegate told me that a woman came up to him at the end of the assembly, very upset that at the closing ceremony God was referred to as "Father"; this would never happen, she said, at the church she attends in Manhattan. At the same time, she told him that her contact with the Orthodox made her understand that she must make an effort to learn more about the Orthodox position.

"It was really the good news and the bad news," he said. "She feels the need to learn more about us, and that's good. But it is significant, and a bad sign, that the very use of biblical language—the language that made it possible for the WCC to form in the first place, the one thing that used to unite us—now divides some of us from one another." □

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

REORDERING THE WORLD

JOHN PAUL II'S 'CENTESIMUS ANNUS'

In 1891 Leo XIII shaped his encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, on the theme of "new things"; in 1991 John Paul II has given us *Centesimus annus* as we debate the need for a "new world order." One way to read this new encyclical is as the pope's contribution to the "new order" debate. Such a reading is defensible if *Centesimus annus* is read in the context of John Paul's other major social teachings, *Laborem exercens* (1981) and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), as well as his 1979 address to the United Nations. Long before the change that has occurred in world politics, the pope had argued that the old order was morally unacceptable and had been developing his conception of reform for the international order. He has articulated his view of a world less controlled by the superpowers, his conception of a united Europe—separated from the "logic of the blocs"—and his conviction

that the peoples and nations of the developing world deserve a different status than the one accorded them by the cold war.

Now that those fundamental changes have taken place, *Centesimus annus* celebrates the change and moves to an analysis of what the moral order requires within and among states.

When Leo XIII wrote *Rerum novarum*, his primary concern was to respond to the suffering of workers in the industrializing world, but he also designed the encyclical to complement his larger effort to restore the church's voice and role to a central place in the public life of the world. The effects of nineteenth-century political, intellectual, and economic life and the stances of his two predecessors (Gregory XVI and Pius IX) had effectively pushed the church to the margins of public life. A major accomplishment of the Leonine papacy was the way in which he began

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the process—intellectually, socially, and politically—of a creative dialogue between church and world.

The setting for *Centesimus annus* could hardly be more different. Throughout the world today, the role of faith and religious life is intricately tied to major political, economic, and social developments. The driving currents of change in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or Latin America cannot be explained without an understanding of the personal and social role of faith. More specifically, the place of the Catholic church in this wider horizon of religion and politics is dramatically different from the situation that Leo confronted. *Centesimus* is guaranteed a hearing in the academies, the embassies, the factories, and *favellas* of the world because John Paul is seen as one of the catalysts of the transformed world scene. When the pope devotes a chapter of the encyclical to “The Year 1989,” it constitutes a rare insight by a participant in the ending of the cold war.

The participant is, however, primarily a pastor and teacher. Hence, the long-term value of the encyclical is the contribution it makes to the social teaching inaugurated by Leo. A significant portion of *Centesimus* is devoted to a rereading of the teachings of Leo, Pius XI, and Pius XII. The developing edge of the teaching in *Centesimus* is exemplified, but not exhausted, by three themes: the role of the market, the teaching on the state, and the evaluation of the use of force.

The market economy: In the century of social teaching no document has come close to the specificity of analysis offered in *Centesimus* about the role of the “free market” in the economy. At one level the qualified endorsement of the market mechanism is analogous to Pius XII’s statements about democracy in the 1940s. There is in *Centesimus* a carefully contained but authentic statement of support in principle for the market economy. The analysis of its role is two-dimensional. At one level the pope offers a clinical commentary on the empirical assets of the market mechanism (“the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs”) and of the capitalist style of economic organization (“which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property, and

the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as for human creativity in the economic sector”). The clinical assessment takes the market reality seriously and acknowledges values in it that John Paul’s predecessors may have assumed but did not assert. The second level of the analysis places the empirical fact of the market within a moral framework, and describes three moral limits: (1) many human needs are not met by the workings of the market; (2) there are whole groups of people without the resources to enter the market; and (3) there are goods that “cannot and must not be bought and sold.”



“Hi! I’m looking for an enlightened businessman...”

The market economy poses a double challenge: how to take advantage of what it does well and how to supplement its acknowledged limits. John Paul’s answer is that the market must be placed in the broader context of state and society. He sees the need for a “juridical framework” within which the market will function, a setting of law and policy that will contain the market and address the human needs it leaves unattended. But what will be the juridical framework at the international level of the economy? The market mechanism is not only a choice that countries can make, it is almost certainly the framework within which the international economy will function. The decentralized nature of international politics has always made

the establishment of such a framework very difficult.

The state: A theory of the role of the state in society runs through *Centesimus*; an entire chapter is devoted to the role of state and culture. The tension in his treatment of the state expresses the pope’s conviction that the state should be involved “directly and indirectly” in fostering economic activity and in defending “the weakest” participants in the economic sectors, but it also reflects his determination to keep the power of the state limited by law and free of totalitarian pretensions. This dialectic is found in previous social encyclicals that espoused an activist state, but one constrained by the principle of subsidiarity. *Centesimus* is more detailed on both dimensions. The brief critique of “the welfare state” is new in papal teaching and it is useful. It stresses the way in which the state—even in pursuit of desirable social objectives—can become an oppressive bureaucracy, and it emphasizes the role of voluntary associations in delivering social services. This critique is puzzling, however, because the range of activities that Catholic teaching, including this encyclical, require the state to perform, particularly in defense of the poor, is usually identical with the role “the welfare state” has fulfilled in many industrial democracies. It would not be surprising if critics of these functions try to use this language to limit the state’s role in the future.

The use of force: A basic theme of this papacy has been to foster nonviolent methods of social change and to raise the moral barriers against the use of force between states. The Gulf War has made the pope even more determined to pursue this course. He refers to the critique he consistently made during the war, and he uses his commentary on “1989” to argue for the possibility of achieving major social objectives—even in the face of state power—without resort to force. A detailed assessment of how *Centesimus* fits into the wider philosophy of John Paul II on war is an article in itself, but one surely comes away from the Gulf debate and this encyclical with a sense that the moral barriers against the use of force are now drawn more tightly by this pope. Where he is moving on this question is not yet clear but surely bears careful watching. □

KEEP YOUR PRAYERS TO YOURSELF?

PUBLIC SPACE & PERSONAL PIETY

R. BRUCE DOUGLASS

I am not accustomed to turning to the sports pages for commentary on the more important issues of the day. Though I am sometimes accused of not knowing the difference, I am generally able to keep the fate of the teams I follow in perspective, and look elsewhere for reflection on the things that truly matter in life. However, more is at stake in what takes place on (and around) the playing fields than the fate of the games themselves. Because sports figure so prominently in our way of life, they can scarcely help but become an arena in which larger issues end up being addressed.

I was vividly reminded of this reading a column by Rick Reilly that appeared in *Sports Illustrated* (February 4, 1991). In a season marked by many ostentatious on-field displays of piety by National Football League players and coaches, the 1991 Super Bowl became an occasion for yet another round of orchestrated public religiosity. In the process, it brought to the surface the predictable reaction to public displays of piety that, sooner or later, somebody like Reilly always raises. I say "predictable" because at this particular moment in our history we are caught up in a far-reaching process of rethinking the pluralistic character of our society, and prayers (or anything that passes for them) in public go to the heart of what that rethinking is all about.

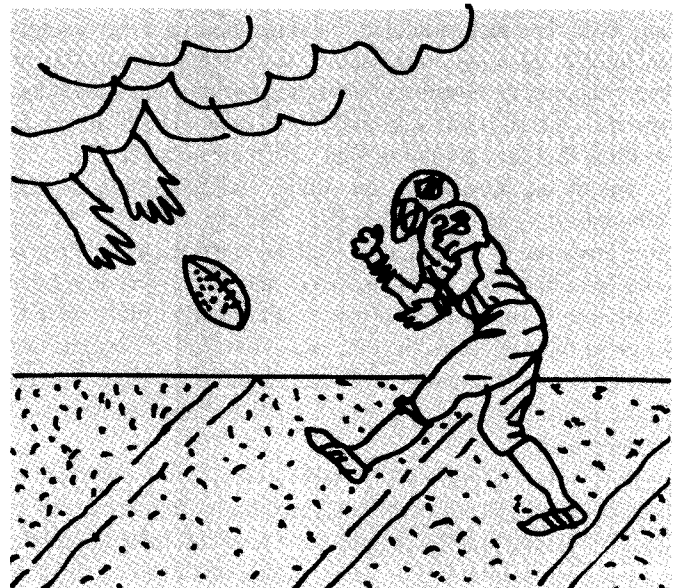
The issue obviously takes different forms in different settings. Although there is a natural tendency in popular discussion to treat all public manifestations of piety identically, they are not in fact all the same. Not by a long shot. Prayer in a public school (especially on the part of a teacher or some other authority figure) raises one kind of issue and the display of a crèche or a Menorah in a public square a somewhat different one. Expressions of personal religious conviction by public figures in a public setting are something else again, especially when they are not acting as "officials."

Columnist Reilly focuses almost entirely on this latter sort of display. He is moved to write because of the way in which he—and other kindred spirits—react to being exposed to public expressions of piety by people performing in an event which

he has voluntarily chosen to attend. No tax dollars are involved—not in the usual sense at least. *Sports Illustrated* may require him to be present, but that too is a matter of personal choice. No entanglement of "church" and "state" is involved. But what is involved is "public space," in the looser, but by no means inconsequential, sense of the common culture.

Reilly, however, chooses to see what is at stake as a matter of coercion. The praying was "deafening" this past season, he writes. And the players who partook in the "elaborately orchestrated fifty-yard-line religious sales pitches" seemed to be oblivious to the fact that "a stadium full of people and a national television audience" were subjected to it "whether they liked it or not." As far as Reilly is concerned, the average fan doesn't come to the stadium to be subjected to such religious indoctrination. "The only conversions he [or she] cares about are extra points."

"Sure, athletes are entitled to freedom of religion like anybody else," he goes on, "but let them exercise it on their own time." Or, if that standard seems a little severe, let them at least keep it innocuous. It's all right for athletes to engage in "fleeting, more or less reflexive displays of faith" (like crossing themselves, as Catholics have been doing for years), but nothing that might



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have the appearance of trying to induce conversion. "Promotional" prayer, he says, is "wholly inappropriate to a sporting event." So inappropriate, in fact, that Reilly wants the NFL to "curtail" it, and if they won't, he advises the networks to delete it from their coverage. "Imposing one's beliefs on a captive audience" is so wrong—even "irreligious," by Reilly's understanding of the matter—that it deserves to be banned. He makes it clear that the prohibition should apply across the board, to any and all believers. It would be just as wrong "for Jewish players to conduct services at the far hash mark or for Muslim players to place prayer rugs under a goalpost and face Mecca."

Reilly's sentiment is hardly unique. In one part of our public life after another, we hear believers being told to keep their religious convictions to themselves. Whether one is writing for a newspaper or teaching school or playing linebacker for the Giants, the expectation is that one will deliberately refrain from giving direct expression to one's most fundamental beliefs in so far as they are at all identifiably "religious."

There is no mistaking, moreover, the extent to which this way of thinking is fast becoming, among those who hold it, more than just an opinion, or one more point of view. The readiness to remove any religious expression from public life, even against people's will (as Reilly's argument reveals), is not uncommon, and it reflects the confidence that goes with its being taken for granted as an ethic. The firm insistence that anything else would be "wrong" is the product of a mentality that is prepared to make it a litmus test of democratic good faith. In the eyes of those who think along these lines, the willingness to avoid giving any cause for offense to people holding other beliefs *is*, for all intents and purposes, what toleration in the realm of religion is all about. Anything less is a betrayal of our commitment to being a pluralistic society where diversity can flourish.

Up to a point, moreover, the sentiment on which this line of reasoning is based is one that is very widely shared in our society, even among believers. In this ecumenical age, there is a convergence between the ethics of belief and the ethics of democratic practice. On religious, almost as much as on political grounds, the presumption is against anything that smacks of intolerance, and even the much-ridiculed fundamentalists are increasingly inclined to go along. In the main, the churches are squarely on record against the injustice of subjecting people to religious indoctrination against their will; and in this case, there is no reason to think that they are out of step with their members.

Toleration, however, is one thing, and submitting to what amounts to a gag rule is something else again. Indeed, the gag rule proposed by Reilly could well be construed as the inverse of toleration. For it amounts to a denial of the very thing that toleration is supposed to provide—the freedom for people to express themselves as they choose. That Reilly's proposition has to do with something as fundamental as the right to make a public profession of religious conviction makes it all the more problematic.

Just who is it, one has to wonder, that is being intolerant to whom? Reilly, sitting in the press box, finds offensive the spectacle of people praying in public and he wants to be spared the ordeal. But submitting to such ordeals, and one can think of

worse ones, surely has something to do, one would think, with what toleration is all about; and the will to suppress the source of the experience is, no less surely, what intolerance is all about. Especially is this so, too, when someone like Reilly appeals for a *prohibition* of the practice that gives offense. It would be one thing if he appealed to the players to refrain voluntarily from the acts that get under his skin. But the fact that he appeals directly to the league—the private "government" in this case—to take the matter in hand cannot help but make his argument end up seeming very different from what it first appears.

The fact that sentiments of this sort can be articulated so matter-of-factly reveals how rapidly the terms of debate on this matter have changed. Once upon a time people who thought as Reilly does were content to confine their arguments to cases of coercion in the strict, juridical sense. Just yesterday, it seems, the issue was whether it was justified for tax dollars to be used to underwrite in any direct way the exercise of religion. But now the terms of the challenge have been expanded to encompass virtually the whole of our common life as a people. *Anything* shared in common by the citizenry—whether it be football or the airwaves or a public building—is fair game for insisting on the silencing of religious expression of the kind that Reilly has in mind.

The grounds for doing so, however, are very shaky, and they become progressively more so the more aggressively the case is pressed. For there is a world of difference, in practice as well as in principle, between public life in the formal juridical sense and the informal one that voluntary activities represent. Arguments that carry force in the one simply do not carry over, at least not directly, into the other.

The other thing that can scarcely help but be noticed, moreover, is just how inconsistent our practice tends to be on this matter. For the same people who are so concerned about the offense that is given by public expressions of piety generally couldn't care less about the sensibilities that are injured when piety itself is abused. In fact, they are usually on the other side in their concern, arguing that freedom of expression is what is at stake and nothing is more important than its protection. Take for example, the case of Andrew Serrano, the artist whose display of a crucifix in a beaker of urine caused such controversy a year ago. In cases of this sort, when a sacred symbol is desecrated, especially in a form construed as art, those whose sensibilities are offended are told, in effect, to swallow any injury they may feel. They are counseled to be "broad-minded," meaning that they should respect the right of others to treat differently the symbols, beliefs, and practices that are sacred to them. Almost regardless of the severity of the offense that is inflicted, the onus is put on *them* to adapt and adjust.

The notion that it might be the responsibility of the one *giving* offense to take the feelings of religious people into account is scarcely given consideration. Indeed, if it is given any thought at all, it is quickly dismissed as "repressive." And even a hint of an objection from those who feel themselves offended, ends in their being told that if they don't like what is being said or

done, they don't have to listen or participate. They can tune out or, better yet, go away.

The inconsistency with which this advice is applied is, however, only the beginning of what is problematic about it. For as Reilly, above all, can appreciate, it's not that easy to absent oneself from offending influences in the wider society. Not unless one is willing to become a hermit. For the complex interconnectedness of modern life is such that the strategy of avoidance has to be considered, if it is taken at all seriously, as a recipe for social isolation.

The obvious question is why one should have to put up with such an imposition or to go along in the abdication of responsibility for the current state of the culture it entails. For that clearly is what the argument implies. Those who are asked to be broad-minded about offenses to things that matter to them are being asked to act as though it didn't matter what others thought and did and what influences people are exposed to. Or, more precisely to the point, they are asked to place a higher value on the good of toleration than on the value that they attach to other goods. Regardless of what it is that they hold dear, they are expected to subordinate it to toleration. Toleration thus becomes the highest good—the end above all others that is to be served in public life.

Few people, however, are really prepared to operate this way. For, it means, almost inevitably, putting up with all sorts of behavior that is, from one point of view or another, offensive. Sometimes deeply so. It also means abandoning the character of the common life to whim and chance. If anything that people choose to say or do is legitimate, nothing, by the same logic, is protected.

But, of course, all of us (or *almost* all, at least) have things that we very much want to be viewed as off limits, and others that we want to be treated with special respect. We want to live in a society that cherishes certain values and treats people in certain ways. So we end up, typically, telling others to tolerate offenses to the things that matter to *them* while simultaneously insisting on dictating the limits of the permissible in the things that matter to *us*. Indeed, all too often, the very same people who are on the cutting edge of toleration with respect to beliefs and practices in which they have little invested (proponents of artistic freedom, for example) will turn around and just as resolutely insist on the enforcement of standards in the things that matter to them (the language that people use to refer to women, blacks, and gays, for example).

There is a lesson in this, moreover, and it has to do with a lot more than just the difficulty of being consistent. For sometimes the inability of people to practice what they preach is instructive, and it turns out to be a virtue instead of a vice. If the ideals by which we profess to live are themselves flawed, common sense gets in the way of living up to them. So rather than directly face up to consequences that don't square with our intuitions about how it is that life ought to be lived, we engage in artful dodges of one sort or another. We tell ourselves, for example, that we're limiting speech *for the sake of toleration*. And try as we might, we have a hard time doing anything else because we know, intuitively (for reasons that go far deeper than just our "backgrounds"), that it would be a mistake to do otherwise.

It is not just, therefore, a mark of bad faith that we are having such a hard time being consistent in what we say and do about toleration. Though there is an element of that, the deeper reason is that our own good judgment gets in the way of being even-handed. For regardless of the value that we attach to toleration, there are other things that we value, too, and when the two are in conflict, we have the good sense to make the necessary adjustments. We don't put our critical faculties on hold, but instead make judgments about how people ought to live—judgments that carry unmistakable prescriptive force. And we act on them—even to the point of seeking to regulate others' behavior.

The problem, however, is that this is done so selectively. I can demand (quite literally) that fairness and good taste be observed in certain cases, but just as certainly I am expected to refrain from making such demands in other cases. These days it is more than all right to be concerned, for example, about the quality of our speech with respect to race and gender, but not with respect to religion. What's the difference? It amounts, I think it has to be said, to little more than an assumption (made by some) that race and gender are a matter of greater urgency in our public life than religion. The abuse inflicted by racist and sexist currents in our speech (and other aspects of our behavior) is perceived to be of such overriding importance that they have to be expunged, even by enforced prohibitions, as some universities are now attempting.

But of course what matters in this regard is in the eye of the beholder. One person's conception of the trivial is another's most pressing concern. In a society that was truly devoted to respecting diversity, this would be taken into account. It would have to be acknowledged that the definition of what is important is itself something on which people are almost certainly going to hold diverse views. And if allowance were made, in turn, for shaping the contours of the common life to accommodate some of them, it would have to be made for others as well.

Unless, moreover, people were willing to forego altogether making—and enforcing—prescriptive judgments about how others behaved, it would have to be acknowledged that an active concern for the quality of our common life would be something to which all citizens were entitled. Indeed, it would be something that as a matter of good citizenship, they would be encouraged to have, and to act upon. Figuring out how to respond to the



"If you ask me, there's such a thing as too much harp!"

resulting claims on the conscience of the wider community would be understood, in turn, as what public life was all about. So instead of being encouraged to be indifferent to what others do and say, as though it didn't matter (which we know to be a lie), people would be encouraged to face up honestly to the differences they have and attempt to work through them to forge a mutually acceptable set of standards for their dealings with one another. In everything from race to religion, we would seek to find ways of conducting ourselves that reflected genuine *respect* for the diversity of the goods we seek.

The substance of the discussion I have in mind would turn on much more than just examining what may give offense. These days, respect for the sensibilities of others is bound to be a significant factor in any fair-minded consideration of what it is that we want the life that we share in common to be. But there is no good reason, at the same time, why it should be allowed to dominate, so that other, (at least) equally important considerations end up being sacrificed. There will always be someone, after all, who is prepared to take offense at even the worthiest of the things people do, and if we allow ourselves to get into the habit of thinking that the range of the permissible is defined by the absence of the capacity to offend, we are almost certain to end up being diminished by it.

So the question that always needs to be asked, whenever offense is in fact taken, is whether the offense is justified. And if so, to what extent. Presumably, in public life just as in private, there are occasions when the fault lies every bit as much (if not more) with the one taking offense as it does with the offending party. And such cases need to be treated accordingly. The thing that also needs to be taken into account is what other effects the act in question might produce. For what is harmful to one may well be beneficial to another, and the only way to make sense fairly of what is at stake for *all* who are affected is to take into account the larger picture.

This is what I believe needs to be done in considering the sort of issue that is posed by people who think as Reilly does. For it is not enough just to know that they are offended by being exposed to the sight of prayer in public places. That doesn't settle anything. Or it shouldn't, at least. The question is whether they are justified in reacting as they do, with such intensity, and more broadly, to carefully consider the ramifications of the policy

they are proposing for the general public. Would all of the relevant interests in fact be well served by the sort of policy Reilly has in mind? And would our way of life really be a better one if it were purged of religious influences in the manner he envisions?

I know that there are people who are prepared to say this is the case. They are convinced, apparently beyond the shadow of a doubt, that we as a people would be better off if our way of life were thoroughly secularized. There is no mistaking the extent to which this is the sentiment that inspires much of the continuing campaign to secularize our public life. But are they justified in doing so? Especially at this late date in the unfolding of the modern project, it is hardly to be taken for granted that they are.

This is a deep and complex issue, and getting more so all the time. It would be one thing if we were still living at a time when the Enlightenment belief that emancipating people from the shackles of "superstition" would make them unambiguously better was still just an idea, yet to be tested by experience. But we do not live in such a time. For all that is "progressive" and "advanced" about the very secular way in which we now live, it can hardly be said that we are in a position to assert dogmatically that we no longer have any need for the civilizing effects that religious influences often provide.

Furthermore, it makes sense to have an open mind about this at a time when we are so manifestly uncertain—with good reason—about the moral (not to speak of spiritual) quality of the life that we share. It would be one thing if we could take for granted a way of life whose capacity to bring out the best in us in this regard was assured. But the fact that we can do no such thing—and arguably would be well advised to assume just the opposite—means that we are hardly in a position to dispense with resources that might be of help to us. Especially not to go *out of our way* to do so.

At a time when the breakdown of even the most elementary moral standards in our everyday dealings with one another is so evident, it takes a particularly doctrinaire mind to see in public expressions of piety only a threat to the sensibilities of those who do not share the faith being expressed. Especially is this true in the context of professional sports. Why not see in prayers on the fifty-yard-line evidence of an antidote to the social irresponsibility that professional athletes all too often display? Especially when such acts are accompanied by behavior, on and off the field, that reflects a conscientious effort to live out the faith being expressed? Why not treat such athletes as examples of the role models that we keep saying our young people need? Why not take them as evidence of a refreshing alternative to the obsessive self-absorption and greed that characterize so much of what goes on in professional sports in this country, and invite others to follow suit?

Why not consider the matter, above all, with something more in mind than just the effect on one's own feelings? There is, after all, something very narcissistic about presuming to dictate standards of behavior in public events on the basis of nothing more than one's own feelings. Surely there is more at stake, and surely there is more that deserves to be taken into account. □



THE WATER IS DEEP

IRIS MURDOCH'S 'UTTERLY DEMANDING PRESENT'

MADELINE MARGET

Iris Murdoch's work is profoundly and brilliantly oxymoronic. While denying the certainty of God's existence, she demonstrates his presence. Her universe is filled with possibility and joy, much of which her characters realize. They're ethically befuddled, at least at first, but her clear moral convictions and ebullient artistic talent result in novels that are entertaining yet never superficially diverting.

Here is a priest, at the end of *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), writing to the novel's omniscient narrator (known only as "N") about the philosopher, Rosanov, of the title:

Metaphysics and the human sciences are made possible by the *penetration of morality into the moment to moment conduct of ordinary life*: The understanding of this fact is religion. This is what Rozanov distantly glimpsed when he was picking away at questions of good and evil, and he knew that it made nonsense of all his sophisms.

There is no beyond, there is only here, the infinitely small, infinitely great, and utterly demanding present.

The passage demonstrates Murdoch's formidable command of structure. A convincingly rendered dialectic, organic to the plot, succinctly carried out by a triumvirate of a religious, an all-knowing mysterious being, and an analytical intellectual is no mean trick. Her artifice is so persuasive that the mysterious becomes immediate, though by its nature it's not fully intelligible. Reading Iris Murdoch's novels is an experience akin to what I imagine total immersion baptism to be: one goes under with optimism and a sense of purpose, and emerges in a state of wonderment, feeling more acutely bewildered than before, and, simultaneously, enlightened. This is an achievement Murdoch repeats over and over again, variously showing us disaster and death, the natural world and symbolism, modern-day quirks and quandaries, all smashed together into a whole that has the surprise of the complicated inevitable. For the reader the result is happiness at a glimpse—one that may grow into a vision—of a greater plan. God's world, for sure.

In nearly forty years of writing, Murdoch has produced close to thirty plays, philosophical and literary treatises, and books, most of them novels. The three I'll discuss are representative of her mature work. Each of the books, however, like Murdoch's

work as a whole, is, in my opinion, impossible to categorize: This is the highest compliment I can pay. Nevertheless, *The Nice and the Good* (1968), *Bruno's Dream* (1969), and *The Philosopher's Pupil*, like much of the rest of her work, present dramatic, even heroic action, the constant use of a particularly powerful symbol (water), and the distinctively Murdochian structure and resolution in which the strands of all the stories are tied together—not necessarily happily, but *acceptably*. Either in, or when critically observing Murdoch's world, one doesn't, ultimately, resent fate.

The Philosopher's Pupil takes place in Ennistone, an English town inhabited by the *haute bourgeoisie* and gypsies—two manifestations of humanity recurrent in Murdoch's novels—and dominated by public baths. One feels the sensuous charm of the spa where, every day, the residents soak and swim and steam and meet. Ennistone, presumably modeled on Bath, is nevertheless fully imagined. Its social stratifications are delineated, its geography is outlined and painted; one sees the shape of its bridges and the green of its lawns. It is concrete.

Fantasy, to Murdoch, is the enemy. She considers it a means of dilly-dallying with one's mind that is the opposite of imagination. Imagination, however, is a highly valuable human attribute that can and should be used to focus on great and worthy



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objects and people. In *The Philosopher's Pupil*, such people are related through family ties and professional ones, through common history and the self-delusion of romantic yearning. Typically, they all get together in the water. *Everyone* swims in Ennistone, and encounters at the pools both further the action and lead to its resolution. Water is as vital a reality as air. The book starts with a marital battle in the rain, and ends with an aborted suicide but successful murder performed in a bathtub.

George McCaffery, the pupil of the title, has a pile of psychological and spiritual trouble. A middle-aged father and husband, unloved by his emotionally maimed and twisted mother, brutal to his wife, dishonorable to his mistress, he's obsessed with his failure to get the respect—the attention and love—of his world-famous, but miserable, mentor, John Robert Rosanov. Rosanov is a man of tortuously convoluted, and often obscure affections, moral priorities, and loyalties. Ultimately, to rid himself of torment, George kills the philosopher.

Shaped by Murdoch's overriding, purposeful intelligence, all this, and a great deal more, is both wacky and realistic. Social ambiguity is not only tolerated but celebrated: sexual orientation and generational and ethnic identifications aren't absolute in Murdoch's novels. Surprises pop up in a joyous manner. In this writer, there's nothing provincial or pious. George McCaffrey doesn't fall into hell, even one of his own making. Though after Rosanov's death George suffers hysterical blindness, he is cured, largely through the intervention of Father Bernard (whose letter I quoted above). George's marriage, albeit imperfect, becomes a loving one. Murdoch rights the world around McCaffrey both by tying up more strings than most of us can hang out or keep track of, let alone manipulate, and by giving all the characters either peace and contentment, or at least the possibility of a path to it.

It's important to note that a lot of the solutions to characters' problems happen by accident. Murdoch has a high regard for happy marriages, and she's opposed to a pessimistic, determinist view of human nature. But she doesn't want us to fall into the vanity of thinking life is altogether manageable. Much is given to us to do. For example, George saves his nephew Adam's dog Zed from drowning. The child, who is charming and emotionally and ethically precocious, is the object of George's brooding, self-indulgent hate because his own child is dead. Nevertheless, fate sweeps Adam's pet into the part of the rough, cold ocean George is swimming in alone, and an act of heroism is granted him.

A similar action, performed intentionally to save another human being, occurs in Murdoch's pivotal 1968 novel *The Nice and the Good*, and is central to it and to Murdoch's work as a whole. John Ducane, the novel's protagonist—I would go so far as to call him its hero, a type that may not exist in Murdoch's work before this book—has been, until his epiphany, a thoughtful but pedestrian man. A nice man. All along, he's wanted to be good, but he's a faithless, plodding, intelligent, likable rationalizer. "Jumbled and immoral," he describes himself to the woman with whom

Books Discussed in this Essay
The Philosopher's Pupil, Penguin, \$7.95
The Nice and the Good, Penguin, \$6.95
Bruno's Dream, Penguin, \$4.95
The Sovereignty of Good, Ark, \$9.95

he's about to fall in love, right before he finds himself rescuing her son. Consequently, his action somehow defies godlessness.

In *The Nice and the Good*, the adolescent boy, Pierce, swims into an ocean cave. Spurned by love, he allows personal disappointment to overwhelm him, and decides to stay in the cave through the duration of a tide, regardless of the consequences:

A great black dart pointed him into this magnetic darkness. Humiliation and rejection and despair had blended into a thrust of desire which no longer had Barbara for its object. That the ordeal might end in death was an essential part of its authority. Yet the hypothesis of this factual death was almost incidental. The concept of death had been growing in Pierce's mind, an expanding, curiously dazzling object which was not a physical possibility or even a consolation, but a supreme object of love.

But when Pierce finds himself lost in the cave, he gets frightened. He clutches his dog, Mingo, and cries.

A series of impulses and contingencies, rather than a decision, make Ducane go after Pierce. At first, there seems no other choice; Pierce will surely drown before the Coast Guard can arrive. Then, as Ducane swims on, the incident seems to him to be isolated from reality, and his effort sure and safe. He is mysteriously propelled by an image of Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* that summons up, for him, femininity in general. He calls out to Pierce and hears a faint cry (it turns out to be the echo of his own voice) and proceeds further. Claustrophobic, terrified, he tries to turn back but is carried forward, to a fate that imposes bravery. He and Pierce meet and—in fifteen pages that are a *tour de force* of intertwined philosophical inquiry and human tenderness—struggle to swim and climb and pull themselves to safety. Along the way, Ducane thinks and promises himself that if he survives he'll concentrate on goodness and love. This is an enactment of Murdoch's own central belief, but there's nothing authorial about its presentation here. Murdoch the artist encompasses and absorbs Murdoch the philosopher; it's John Ducane's experience we're shown.

Meanwhile, Pierce's mother, Mary, waits in a rowboat in a condition of fearful, desperate hope. After many years of guilt-ridden widowhood, she's able to think peacefully of her husband as dead. "Death happens, love happens, and all human life is compact of accident and chance." An obvious moment of grace. When Ducane appears (following the safe return of the dog and then Pierce), flopping naked onto the bottom of her boat, Mary covers him with her overcoat, hugs him, and is in love.

Despite the schematic nature of this long passage, it is not at all contrived. Its symbolic component intensifies its realism.

The near-drowning of foolish young Pierce carries tremendous pathos, and the revelation of Ducane as a great man makes one long for his victory and fear his loss. The first time I read the scene I found it so frightening my own breathing got strained, and my heart pounded.

Murdoch packs her wallop not with this scene alone, of course, but through the understanding she's built in the three hundred pages that precede it. Her compact, after all, is, at least chiefly, with readers, and by the time John Ducane takes this ultimate step in his transformation we know the world he inhabits as absurd yet desirable, valuable, not beyond description, but because of it.

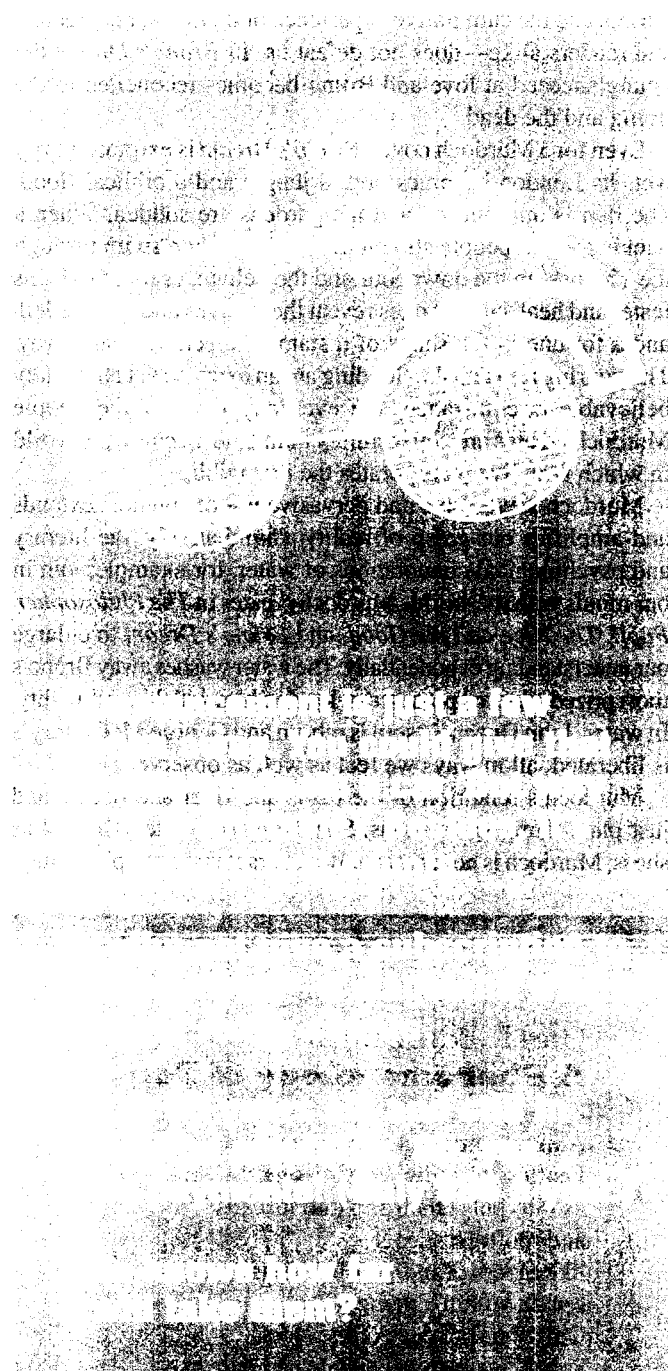
It is impossible to sum up any, let alone all, of Murdoch's plots. But it is also difficult to forgo the attempt, because so much of her genius lies in her ability to create the very texture of reality. Murdoch constantly emphasizes the coexistence of apparently mutually exclusive circumstances and human qualities, so that when she describes a gorgeous, ludicrous, amoral woman's naked body, she tells us it reveals "the pathetic ugliness of real flesh and also its attractiveness."

So it is with the title character of *Bruno's Dream*, a dying old man—decaying but, it turns out, somehow desirable—who is filled with regret and remorse over others who have died: his wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law, people whose memory connects and separates all the book's characters. Bruno's son Miles resentfully mourns his long-dead first wife, thus neglecting his second one, whose sister Lisa is in love with him. Bruno himself meditates on estrangements—that which existed between him and his wife, and the one that continues between him and his son. Bruno's earthly existence is almost over. His body is decrepit, but it inspires love; his daughter-in-law Diana, focused on him, detaches herself from her problems. "She tried to think about herself but there seemed nothing there....One isn't anything, and yet one loves people. How could that be?"

Diana is perplexed at the very end of the novel, when she knows Bruno is about to die. The juxtapositions are critically Murdochian. In *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), a collection of three essays, two of which were published before the novels discussed here, Murdoch wrote:

Goodness is connected with the acceptance of real death and real chance and real transience and only against the background of this acceptance, which is psychologically so difficult, can we understand the full extent of what virtue is like. The acceptance of death is an acceptance of our own nothingness which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves. The good man is humble....

Individual lives contribute to the whole, but don't control it, and Murdoch does not allow her characters what, in *The Sovereignty of Good*, she refers to as the "consolation of...despair." Sometimes, as with John Ducane, or with Lisa in *Bruno's Dream*, men and women can decide to love someone free and able to love them, and they can strive to be good. Frequently, though, the plot's—life's—contingencies push them in the right direction. Problems work out, or fall away, or are



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buried, and the cumulative experience of them—for characters and readers alike—does not defeat us. In *Bruno's Dream* the young succeed at love and Bruno becomes reconciled to the living and the dead.

Even for a Murdoch novel, *Bruno's Dream* is extraordinarily wet. Its London becomes both a jungle and a biblical flood. The rain is unrelenting and the gardens are sodden. When a duel is fought, people slip on the mud and then swim through the Thames. In the downpour and the deluge, scars of old sins fester and heal, current ones reveal themselves and are quelled, and a fortune in the shape of a stamp collection floats away. The pouring rain and the flooding are an extreme yet absolutely believable circumstance; the everyday lives of the people Murdoch creates are never simply mundane, because the world in which they live incorporates the intangible.

Murdoch's extensive and pervasive use of symbols extends and amplifies our grasp of reality. Cumulatively, the literary and psychological connotations of water, for example, join in our minds with the worlds Murdoch creates in *The Philosopher Pupil*, *The Nice and the Good*, and *Bruno's Dream* to enlarge our understanding exponentially. The water washes away Bruno's most prized material possession, leaving him with his spirituality. In water, John Ducane's soul is reborn and George McCaffery's is liberated, all in ways we feel as well as observe.

Murdoch's rendition of the baths and river and ocean, and just plain damp is sensuous. She's a warm writer. Critical as she is, Murdoch is never mean. Her characters have opportunity,

and she lends them, too, open-heartedness. People put the always messy, sometimes wicked, past to rest, and settle down with each other. The motion of the novels, though sometimes frenetic, is toward the internal peace and freedom love brings, not toward obsession or fixation or any other psychological distortions.

This is Murdoch's stance, articulated in *The Sovereignty of Good*, and shown to us in the novels. She counsels "loving attention"—concentration on goodness, especially in other worthy human beings—as the way to achieve and enact virtue. She is in favor of "the techniques of religion," specifically prayer, and opposed to self-absorption in any form. "Good," she says, "is the magnetic center towards which love naturally moves." Murdoch offers her philosophy and advice partly, at least, to fill a void in a godless world, but I don't see anything contradictory in a believer's living them out. It seems to me that whether one sees God as a symbol on which to focus, integral to human understanding, but limited to ending with our individual earthly consciousness, or believes God is a separate entity to be better known in the future, Murdoch is supplying us with enlightening and enlarging ways of understanding and acting. God's reflection in human life after all is the most accessible, as well as constant and concrete, manifestation of his presence. Addressing his fleshly shadow is everybody's business, conscious and purposeful or not. Murdoch's argument in favor of goodness and love doesn't—can't—preclude God. Whether or not it qualifies as religion seems to me less a question of theology than semantics.

Words, however, are important. Murdoch is an absolute believer in the importance of literature. In the 1961 essay "Against Dryness" (available in *Modern Critical Views: Iris Murdoch*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House, 1986), she argues that art—good art, not the slick and sentimental, the overly formed or the lazily formulated—can give us the fullest possible truth, one without self-delusion. I think she succeeds in meeting her own impeccable standard. Murdoch is brilliantly acute and deeply reflective. The generosity with which she uses these attributes is wholly admirable, and the result is prodigiously productive. The quality that most gives her novels their beauty and importance, however, isn't the result of her virtuous will alone, and it certainly isn't purely intellectual achievement. The source of the vitality in Murdoch's work is beyond explanation.

It is the liveliness in Iris Murdoch's novels—their bounce, and the convincing reality they convey—that shows the existence of form, meaning, and mystery in the universe. Her portrayal of the force and beauty of the natural world, of human character in its variety, and her story-telling ability—her dexterity at building and resolving plots—together create an "utterly demanding present." It takes us out of ourselves, yet we don't completely enter the worlds Murdoch creates. We look at them and think about them, rather than sink into them. The writer gives us distance along with immediacy and pleasure. Murdoch the philosopher and Murdoch the artist are wonderfully consistent; her stories don't offer either the romanticism or "the consolation of despair" she deplores. Instead, they demonstrate the words of an acquaintance of mine, a young woman troubled and grieving at the possibility of her beloved mother's premature death, who said that, in any case, "God's breath is everywhere." □

Carl L. Bankston III

A Phenomenology of Fog

A mind settles on the neighborhood.

Leafless trees finger its tissues,
as if to pulse their sap into its cells
and rooftops slice it
like razors of indigestible ideas.

I walk within a thought.

Only the spondees of the clock
knock against walls white and bare as
concentration.

The filament strung in the bulb
hung from the ceiling
vibrates with cerebral tension;
it shudders light
and the light probes from the window like
a scalpel.

Where it cuts away the evening fog

I see a square of uncut grass.

But the shapes of churches, homes, and fences
are as vague as childhood lessons in geometry.

TIME TO GET OFF THE BUS?

THE COURTS, SCHOOLS & DESEGREGATION

J. S. FUERST

Last winter the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on a school desegregation case, *Oklahoma City School District (OCSD) v. Dowell*, that permits the OCSD to continue to operate eleven all-black public elementary schools (known as the Dowell schools). Busing black children to white schools and white children to black schools in grades kindergarten through four had been discontinued in the Dowell schools. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the lower federal court that the OCSD had performed in a nondiscriminatory manner for several years, administering a "unitary" not a "dual" system, and that court supervision of the OCSD was no longer necessary.

The decision can be construed as a modification of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 desegregation decision that ruled against so-called "separate but equal" schools. The question is: Is the Court backsliding? Already the opposing sides are beginning to crystallize. The proponents of absolute desegregation maintain that unless all public schools are racially integrated (including Oklahoma City's), the mandates of *Brown* are being eroded. Hardcore antibusers are gloating over the possible demise of public school desegregation.

But the OCSD decision was anything but clear-cut. In all likelihood, the impact of the decision will be minimal, although economic uncertainties—busing costs money—will be exploited by antibusing right wingers. Still, busing programs are in place in most large cities across the nation. Where discrimination is found, the courts most likely will uphold busing as a remedy. Admittedly, however, the complex question of single-race schools in districts where school boards are not guilty of racially segregating students will be around for the foreseeable future.

In this context, the OCSD case helps illuminate a basic paradox of the federal government's continuing effort to desegregate public education. As Justice Lewis Powell said in a 1980 Dallas school case (*Estes v. NAACP*), "out of zeal to remedy one evil, courts may set the stage for other evils. In short, by acting against single-race [white] schools, one may produce single-race [black] school systems."

The need for some formal court acceptance of single-race schools has been apparent since 1974 when the Supreme Court, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, overturned a lower court decision to integrate the urban and suburban schools of Detroit. Once the high

court ruled that the government could not mandate the integration of city with suburban districts, it was virtually inevitable that the big cities, of which there are about forty, with large black populations and even larger black student concentrations (averaging 72 percent per city), would have many all-black schools. This was recognized by several federal courts in cities like St. Louis and Milwaukee where judges imposed school integration ratios within districts which took into account the reality of a certain proportion of single-race schools. In other words, as long as there is significant housing segregation, and all-black urban inner city areas with considerable clusters of minorities, and as long as *Milliken v. Bradley* is not reversed, there will be some all-black schools.

In Oklahoma City there are eleven all-black elementary schools, a few other schools with heavy black majorities, and a few with mostly white students. The remaining schools—well over half—are integrated and show even more racial balance. The racial distribution of the school system as a whole is 45 percent white, 40 percent black, 8 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Native American, and 2 percent Asian.

In arguing its case, the OCSD noted that the eleven all-black schools integrated by the OCSD board following the first court decision in 1972 reverted to all-black status when white families either moved away or took their children out of the school system. Moreover, children at these all-black schools eventually attend secondary schools with white children, thus conforming to the terms and the aims of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Likewise, as the OCSD stressed, any parent of a child in these all-black schools, or in fact in any other school, who wishes her child to go to a racially integrated school has only to request it. Further, the OCSD averred that it currently is spending \$2,300 per capita for black children (\$200 more than for the average child), and the number of children per class in the all-black schools is only seventeen versus twenty in the district generally. Additionally, the OCSD emphasized that the educational gap between black and white children as measured by reading and math scores had narrowed. Finally, the OCSD offered evidence that black parents and the black community generally preferred to have their own schools improved so that their young children would not have to be bused out of the community to obtain quality education.

Although the Supreme Court did not specifically note this point in its decision, it is clear that the only way that the OCSD was able to implement its nondiscriminatory policies was by the extensive use of busing. In fact, more than half the children

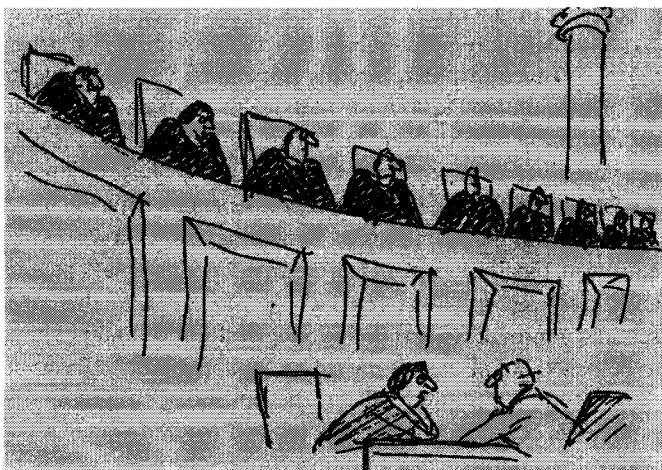
J.S. FUERST teaches in the school of social work at Loyola University in Chicago.

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in the system are still based. In essence, the decision does not undermine busing but is built upon a largely successful busing program or option.

A readiness to live with single-race schools comes from several quarters, however. Many white segregationists are all too happy to have blacks demanding their own schools. More unexpectedly, considerable support for single-race schools comes from disenchanted black parents and citizens who have waited overlong for school integration and school improvement. Other blacks have been angered and disappointed by the results of integration. Additionally, many of these blacks believe that black schools and black teachers provide better education, better socialization, and better role models for black children. Finally, a willingness to live with some single-race schools comes from realistic blacks and whites who see no immediate end to the de facto segregation of housing. In many cities there are not enough whites to make any effective school integration possible. Apart from the black separatists, who are few though on the increase, many blacks and Hispanics recognize that while awaiting the day of complete integration, there is a pressing need for allocating substantially more money to the strengthening of these single-race schools. Better principals, teaching staff, equipment, services, and buildings are needed. A greater push towards integrated schools may come down the road.

On the other hand, critics of the Supreme Court decision on the OCSD argue, along with the dissent offered by Justice Thurgood Marshall, that by definition single-race schools are discriminatory. Further, they argue, with some merit, that the present rates of improvement in all-black schools in Oklahoma City are still pathetically inadequate and that regardless of their possible merit, the schools serving the low-income families in these areas are not adequately funded. Observers also claim that black parents in these areas are reluctant to take advantage of optional busing, and that not enough publicity about this option has been made available. Teachers in the black schools are substantially less experienced, they add, and the schools themselves are less well equipped than those in the average district schools. Furthermore, the OCSD has used few creative approaches such as magnet schools.



"Too many cooks"

It is undoubtedly correct that the educational system of the Oklahoma City School District has a very long way to go, and the racial integration of black and white students in its public schools, while comparatively good for the South, leaves much to be desired. It may well be that until this gap is closed, court supervision should be continued. Certainly many well-to-do whites have fled Oklahoma City, or at least have taken their children out of the public schools. But the OCSD does offer integrated schooling to a large number of white, black, Indian, and Hispanic children—something that cannot be overlooked.

Opponents of the OCSD decision contend that the most dangerous aspect of the ruling is that it may offer a precedent for cities to limit expensive busing programs in favor of single-race schools. To be accepted by the courts, however, school systems will have to prove, as the OCSD did, that they are in fact nondiscriminatory. Despite the more conservative bent of the federal courts, that may not be an easy task.

Moreover, the overwhelming and greatly overlooked fact is that an increasing number of cities and towns are educating black and white children together, and this is mostly being effectuated through busing. It is important to understand that more than half of the 6 million black children in public schools are studying along side white children. Since housing integration is proceeding at a snail's pace, many cities throughout the country, from Berkeley and Fresno in California to Buffalo, Rochester, and New Rochelle in New York, rely on busing. The use of busing to achieve racial integration is endorsed by many school administrators, and in many cities busing is no longer an issue.

Admittedly, two-way busing as mandated by Federal Judge Arthur Garrity in Boston has not been successful in the forty largest U.S. cities and has brought on an exodus of white families. These families refused to have their children bused to black schools in black neighborhoods. Most of the schools in question were substantially inferior. Many federal judges have not even included two-way busing in their remedial programs except on a purely voluntary basis. Responsible educators such as Harold Howe, former secretary of education, and Kenneth Clark of Columbia University, also agree that busing students to inferior schools is no remedy for segregation.

Even in those cities where one-way busing has been successful, there has been some decline in the number of white students who participate in school integration where the numbers of minorities are too great. Nevertheless, the significant fact remains that growing numbers of white and black, Hispanic and Asian children are going to school together. Additionally, in cities with smaller black percentages, even two-way busing has been successful; but this has almost always taken place when the schools in the black neighborhoods have been converted into special magnet schools.

It would not be too much to say that one of the best kept secrets in the U.S. is the widespread success of busing in achieving both racial integration in schools and improved education and socialization. Despite the naysayers, there is considerable agreement that the general principles of *Brown v. Board of Education* are correct. Racially integrated schools are better for black and

white children; and where there is segregated housing, busing is an effective tool to bring about such racial integration. At the same time, it must also be recognized that many schools exclusively serving black children will be with us for the calculable future—certainly as long as there is a degree of segregated housing—and that these schools must be better financed.

Finally, to those who are concerned that *OCS D v. Dowell* represents backsliding, it should be noted that the case merely recognizes what has been a *fait accompli* in big cities for many years. The corollary of residential segregation is school racial separation. Of course citizens have the right to move and thus to some degree to frustrate the desegregation rulings of federal courts. Unfortunately, no reversal of *Milliken v. Bradley*, which might require integration between city and suburban school districts, is on the horizon. Happily, however, a number of suburban districts have opened their schools to city children either through metropolitanization, as in Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina, or through city-suburban agreements, as in Milwaukee, Boston, Louisville, and St. Louis. Only a reversal or a reappraisal of *Milliken v. Bradley* will more completely integrate city schools. In the meantime, the fact of “separate but equal” schools remains a problem with only partial solutions. □

STAGE

LOST IN TRANSLATION

‘THE SECRET GARDEN(S)’

Judging by the number of editions of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* currently in print, there are a great many ten-year-old girls out there discovering the book and identifying with Mary Lennox, the novel’s touchy heroine. An orphan (read, child who feels isolated), she discovers the secret garden and there creates her own family—flora, fauna, and a few choice human beings. *The Secret Garden* was never a boy’s book, and it is probably not best to come to it for the first time, as I did, as a sixty-five-year-old boy. (It is certainly much easier to read than Gene Stratton Porter’s *A Girl of the Limberlost*, another popular turn-of-the-century redemption-and-reconciliation novel that I struggled with recently.) But the sentimental passages were obvious to me, as they would not have been to the book’s proper audience, and I could not help feeling that the book should not have ended in the embrace of the Cravens, father and son, but that Archibald should have been had up for child abuse. That is a contemporary reaction. After all, Burnett’s greatest accomplishment in the novel—even more than her recognition that every child needs a secret garden—is her child’s view of the world in which all adults are either indifferent or incompetent. The book’s theme about the reinvigorating power of nature and the great chain of being as a kind of daisy chain in which plants, animals, and people join hands seems particularly pertinent in the age of ozone depletion. Finally, however, I was simply sucked

into the story, rooting for Mary and Colin and Dickon and the magic they were working in the garden. I never expected to feel protective toward the book, but I did, which was altogether the wrong state of mind to approach the two new stage adaptations.

The opera version of the work (music by Greg Pliska, libretto by David Ives) was presented by the Pennsylvania Operatic Theater in March. More than simply a commission, it was a collaborative effort. Pliska and Ives had worked since 1987 with Barbara Silverstein, the artistic director of the company who was also conductor and musical director of the performance, with Michael Montel, the stage director, and with company singers to test the musical and theatrical viability of scenes, music, lyrics. Although the process may be admirable (it bears more than a slight resemblance to the present workshop-to-Broadway development of musical comedies), the result is a static work in which set pieces replace dramatic action.

There is a great deal of singing about trying to find the secret garden, which turns out not to be difficult since the book’s buried key is hanging from a tree limb here and the discovery of the hidden entrance is the exclamation, “There’s the door!” This obviousness suggests that the opera is kidding the original, which is not the intention. The regenerative power of spring is muted here, although the miracle-gro song to encourage the dead-looking garden to blossom (“seed rise up and meet the sun”) is reprised to get the sickly Colin to his feet (“Colin rise up and meet the sun”). Colin, by the way, was an extremely healthy looking invalid in the person of Peter Gillis, which was one of the problems for me. In a work like Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges*, an adult can sing the bratty child effectively since other grown-ups are singing furniture, trees, and frogs; but *The Secret Garden* needs real children. The score, as Silverstein indicates in the theater newsletter, is a blend of styles, but it is oddly bland. My uneducated ear seemed at times to get a hint of Sondheim, and the piece could certainly have used some of that composer’s sardonic force and a touch of his into-the-woods joy. The production did not have the budget for the expensive elegance of the Broadway musical. The most effective scene theatrically—and musically, for that matter—had nothing to do with the secret garden. It was Mary’s wandering through the nearly deserted mansion in which the small chorus, manipulating mirrors, could suggest the portrait gallery and the extent of Mary’s solitariness.

The *Secret Garden*, on Broadway, is a handsome and often appealing show, but Marsha Norman, who did the book and lyrics, is only minimally interested in Burnett’s novel. Although the show has three attractive performers in what should be the three leading roles (Daisy Eagan has deservedly been much praised as Mary Lennox), the children are upstaged by adults, living and dead. The new main plot is how Archibald (Mandy Pantinkin) finally comes to terms with the death of his wife (Rebecca Luker) and incidentally rediscovers his son. Dr. Craven, Archibald’s wonderfully inept cousin in the novel, has been promoted to brother, providing belated sibling rivalry; both were/are in love with the dead Lily’s eyes (see the song of that title) and

S.E. Mead **Amputations**

Without anesthesia, walking
sticks behind a cyclone fence
getting through most days
on only one bowl of porridge.

Swallowing's strenuous, some *Secret*
nearly closing over from so much
emptiness, nausea, an acidic gullet
and its limp lump, that sacrifice
required to slump away from
the phantom trap.

Why's it coming back, always a succubus,
dybbuk, I go on mouthing about?

There was a vice, straps and the blade
blacking out everything but the pain gunny
sack breathed till to suffocate sounded
like salvation.

Of course, this is hindsight. During
the act I was a scream, merely, whereas
now hands, kindly, sensitive tips, occasionally
raise a spoon, check the gauze for drainage
and life has resumed a small suggestion of
humanity, that hope, exhausted gratitude still
doing all it can with hurt just a
(fac-)

for I am black (tor)
a kind of indian in
this land from which (con-)
my blood (stant)
must be cut

Neville thinks the estate should have come to him and may yet if he can persuade Colin that he is sick enough to die. The only reason that I can see for turning the character into a villain (indifference is so much more frightening than villainy) is that it provides a role for the estimable Robert Westenberg (the Big Bad Wolf from *Into the Woods*).

If the children have to edge their way around the brothers to get to their own story, they also have to face the beneficent interference of the dead Lily, who is as busy as Mr. Jordan or Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life* (without their heavenly credentials). But she is only the most prominent of the ghosts that haunt the play. Mary's parents, her Indian servants, and various unidentified

waltzers float in with great frequency and make scenes difficult to perceive. They also falsify one of Burnett's central points—that Mary, surrounded by people in India, was as isolated as when she is alone in Yorkshire. A note in the *New York Times* on May 3 indicated that, even though the show was open and running, the producers were planning to cut back on the intrusive ghosts to make things clearer for children, an important element in potential audiences.

Both musical versions of the book recognize the vitality of Martha (Dickon's sister, the chambermaid who looks after Mary) as a character and keep her on hand for the final triumph in the garden; Burnett simply forgot her. Both recognize that the dressing scene between her and Mary is a natural for a musical number. On stage, there are problems with the garden itself. Set bound, the opera could not present the garden until the end of the play, when a crumpled, discolored canvas was removed to reveal a pastel garden set, which means that the three children have to discover the garden at once. That does away with the moment which true Gardenites will insist is the most important one in the book, when Mary enters the garden alone and thinks the dormant plants are dead. That scene isn't on Broadway either. We get more of the garden there, although Heidi Landesman's charmingly theatrical sets never evoke the real magic that Burnett had in mind. For that, you might well turn to the 1984 BBC adaptation of the book in which film can show the changing garden, can let us see and almost touch Dickon's animals and the robin which leads Mary to the garden. Both the opera and the musical have their virtues, but if it is Burnett's *Secret Garden* you want to see, check your video store for the film.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

LETHAL SMOOCHES

'KISS' & 'MORTAL THOUGHTS'

A couple of days before a play opens, its cast usually meets in a rehearsal room or a hallway for what is called a "line run." The word "run" is precise for the actors usually race through the script, deliberately discarding the inflections and pauses that have evolved during rehearsals and that will be revived on opening night. No director is present or needed, only an assistant stage manager holding the prompt book to make sure everyone is word perfect. For that is the line run's purpose: it's a last-minute step towards making the performers so fluent that opening night jitters won't make them go blank once the curtain goes up. Of course, if you were ever to blunder into a line run, you would swear that you had never seen such colorless, such toneless, such spunkless actors in your entire life.

But if you harbor a perverse desire to be present at such a rehearsal, just betake yourself to *A Kiss Before Dying*, the latest

adaptation of Ira Levin's melodramatic variation on *An American Tragedy*. Up there on the screen are such unequally gifted actors as Matt Dillon, Sean Young, James Russo, and Max von Sydow doing, as far as I can tell, a line run. And if line runs in rehearsal rooms or corridors make actors seem like so many chanting androids, imagine how movie performers register with their expressionless faces twenty feet tall and forty feet wide. When, late in this movie, Sean Young, recalling the effect her brother's suicide had on her, says, "I was a total zombie," you feel like shouting back at the screen, "But you're still a total zombie!"

Were the actors misdirected or did they simply refuse to deliver? I suspect the latter. I think that once they realized they had been duped or self-duped into doing James Dearden's wretched script, the performers embarked on a sort of misguided, internal strike. *A Kiss Before Dying* amplifies every absurdity of Levin's novel and stifles all the possibilities of this story of a psychotic young proletarian who murders and marries his way into a super-capitalist family.

In 1956, Robert Wagner and Joanne Woodward did the first screen version of this story in *Kiss*. Wagner has never, to understate the case, been one of my favorite actors. Yet, performing the story's first murder (an inconveniently pregnant fiancée is chucked off a skyscraper), Wagner did something that was both memorable in itself and dramatically fruitful for the rest of the movie. After he pushed the girl to her death, Wagner kept his arms extended straight out for several seconds and his entire body locked stiff in reaction to what he had just done. The effect was shocking because the murderer himself was shocked. This moment insured that the audience would remain at least slightly interested in the young psycho as he goes about eliminating others throughout the remainder of the film. He is a monster worth watching precisely because he is an *apprentice* monster who must, to use Thomas Harris's grim description of another killer in his novel *Red Dragon*, grow as accustomed to the screams of his victims as a sculptor grows accustomed to dust.

Matt Dillon does the same scene in the remake, but he shows no emotion whatsoever even though this is presumably the character's first murder. If a protagonist is stone-cold vicious to begin with, why should we watch him for another two hours, even if his depredations are artfully filmed (which is decidedly not the case here!), even if his victims are sympathetic or interesting people (which is decidedly, etc.)? It's much more fun to watch an honest-to-God robot like Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminator.

BAYONNE WIVES SLAY HUSBANDS IN MURDER SWAP. That's what *Mortal Thoughts* boils down to before the final credits roll up. Yet the bulk of the movie offers a much different story: Cynthia (Demi Moore), a hairdresser with a conventional marriage, is the quietly horrified and fascinated witness of the ongoing marital warfare between her childhood pal and fellow beautician Joyce (Glenne Headly) and her brutal cokehead of a husband (Bruce Willis). When Joyce kills her husband, Cynthia loyally covers up the circumstances of the slaying. One thing, of course, leads to another and Cynthia, now a virtual accomplice

to murder, sees her own marriage come to a violent halt.

If director Alan Rudolph and his scriptwriters had stuck to that story and committed themselves to exploring its ramifications, the result might have been an Americanized, murderous version of *Entre Nous*: a study of how the bonds between women—rooted in childhood friendship, common culture, and mutual commiseration over the sexual depredations of males—can finally destroy marital loyalty. But a flashback at the very end of this movie completely jettisons what we have just spent two hours watching. Characterization, motivation, social comment, narrative drive are all flushed down the drain for the sake of a final twist that reduces *Mortal Thoughts* to the headline with which I began this review.

But long before that twist, *Mortal Thoughts* is lamed by flighty direction and overblown, sweatily naturalistic acting. Rudolph uses slow motion photography as if he had discovered the technique yesterday. Sometimes it is legitimately employed to convey a character's bewilderment, as when Moore is led into a police station for questioning. But why is an elderly man also shot in slow motion when he is merely collecting gifts at his daughter's wedding? Rudolph isn't even sure of how to begin and end certain sequences. When a police officer rises from his chair after questioning a witness, the camera comes to rest on the revolver at his hip. Why? The cop isn't about to use his gun nor is he being particularly tough or menacing at that moment. But it's a striking way to end a scene so Rudolph tosses it at us, like a composer ending a symphonic movement with a clash of cymbals because he can't think of the right notes to set down. At one point, Rudolph begins a scene with a shot of the sky, not because the sky plays a part in what follows but because the director wants to fill the entire screen with eye-stunning brightness so that the audience will be startled into an attention that the filmmaking hasn't earned. Just keep clashing those cymbals and nobody will fall asleep.

All the actors work so hard on their New York/New Jersey Italian-American accents that they end up looking like drama students trying to impress a teacher with their homework. The usually witty Glenne Headly is the most egregious example of this. But Bruce Willis does well as the husband/victim. He doesn't coast on the wise-guy persona he developed in *Moonlighting* and *Die Hard* but reshapes it without fuss into an appropriately repellent character.

I saw both *A Kiss Before Dying* and *Mortal Thoughts* in the company of dating couples, ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-five. Both audiences were quiet and attentive. These weren't young people just killing time or out for a lark. They had come to be told a story and were willing to follow it with attention. After *Kiss*, the lights came up on a quietly bored, almost comatose audience. The movie had promised nothing from its very first frame, and so, when nothing was delivered, there were no complaints. At the end of *Mortal Thoughts*, there was a mild explosion of rage. The audience had been gripped by the putative story and its themes and therefore felt cheated by the last-minute cop-out.

With their lack of interest in their own projects, American commercial filmmakers are eliminating the very audiences they so desperately want to attract.

RICHARD ALLEVA

14 June 1991: 407

Charles the Great

Dickens was a hard man to follow. He walked twelve miles a day on average and kept up a pace of over four miles an hour. Peter Ackroyd leaves us a record of obsessive jaunts, day or night, through London, Paris, in Italy, or in the Kentish countryside. The energy that drove Dickens made him as great a pedestrian as it did a creative writer. Ackroyd sets his own arduous pace in a biography that marches eleven-hundred pages through a fifty-seven year life and suggests that the way through the high places of libraries has been steep. The author assures us in his acknowledgments that he has read all Dickens's extant correspondence, published and unpublished, and later explains that each of three readings of all the fiction took him three to four months. On top of that he read most of the book-length critical studies "all the way through." Given this commitment, no fellow traveler with Ackroyd can be mean-spirited about the journey: Ackroyd seems to know everything there is to know, tells all, speculates honestly, and even gives the reader time to catch breath in a total of seven "inter-chapters," five in which Dickens talks to Ackroyd, his characters, or to George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, and Thomas Chatterton; and two in which Ackroyd talks to himself. (Ackroyd has published books on all the writers he summons up.)

This is a squat chest of a book, full of treasures. One hopes that Dickens might pop out like a jack-in-the-box with the surprise and frolic of the "Here we are!"—the phrase with which he introduced himself to his first admiring Boston audience. But the comic caricaturist will not appear like that. Ackroyd's tale has too much weight; the circling pattern which he finds in the biographical details and which he orchestrates in sonorous prose moves from begin-

DICKENS

Peter Ackroyd

HarperCollins, \$35, 1,100 pp.

Edward T. Wheeler

ning to end immediately. The story starts with Dickens's death, the comic face a death mask. The chest is a coffin. Paradox recurs in the analysis of Dickens's personality, his relationship to his family, his social views and reforming efforts, his ability to construe reality in fiction and in his relationship to his age. As an editor, Dickens was always demanding that his contributors, "brighten, brighten" their stories or articles. We learn quickly why he wanted to light up his dark world with brightness, even as he appeared to scintillate.

The familiar pattern of Dickens's life emerges, documented fully and extended by reference to the novels: childhood in Kent, father's debts, the blacking factory in London, the trauma caused by mother's wish to keep him working, early success in writing, instant fame with *Pickwick* and *Oliver*, the trials of serial publication, transatlantic tours, editing periodicals, the famed dramatic readings, and finally the premature death at fifty-seven, burnt out from burning too brightly—and charred too darkly. Thirty-five chapters, extraordinary in detail and acute in analysis. The size of the narrative seems to subvert any reductive threats, any attempt to limit Dickens to the mere sum of biographical parts. Ackroyd sees Dickens's violent reaction to things American, for instance, as rejection of himself; he pilloried American ambition, money-hunger, and hypocrisy because he could not bear to see outside of him what he hid within. The paradoxical method seeks to resolve itself in appeals to genius, creative energy, mystery. There are some things we cannot know, Ackroyd

tells us, but he hints at what we can admire. This is his comment on the false turn Dickens almost made when he hoped to become an actor:

The stage was not his destiny, and so he became ill on the day which that particular future opened for him ... there is in great artists a secret momentum that always draws them forward so that they can ride over obstacles and avoid side-tracks ... there was something which ineluctably led him forward to his proper destination.

But much we can know is intriguing: Dickens's skills as a court shorthand stenographer, which gave him phonetic accuracy in recording characters' voices, his love of the stage and the dramatic grounding of his novelistic style—he went to the theater at least once a week throughout his life—and his fastidious organization of the projects of the philanthropist Miss Burdett-Coutts designed to improve living conditions for London's "inner city" poor. Ackroyd also has intriguing things to say about Dickens's rejection of his wife of twenty-two years and his relationship with the actress Ellen Ternan. We have not a rollicking narration, but certainly a characterization as eccentric and as engaging as any of Dickens's own fictions—which is Ackroyd's point. There is no explaining genius and there is no real separation of Dickens's art and life. This point is made over and over again and becomes the cause (and hopes to be the effect) of writing the biography. Dickens composed his "real" world and his "fictional" world:

He could not escape his past, or the anxieties of his past which sometimes had more reality than the real world all around him. ... He only really felt it [an emotion] when he had composed it; to have left these sentiments unstated would have meant

that, for him, they did not really exist.

Hence Dickens's paradoxical nature and his greatness as an artist are a function of his success in depiction, in telling the story his way, as much as those characters, real or imagined—and quotation marks could surround either term—would allow him. There is something curious about this argument: Dickens's uniqueness lies in the collapse of the distinctions between reality and fiction and only his genius saves him from being a solipsist. Indeed, the sales of his books then and now force another paradox. His uniqueness makes him universally appealing and representative. Ackroyd sees Bleak House as the true image of midcentury Britain and not the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace.

Ackroyd, a novelist himself and a chronicler of London past and present in *Hawksmoor* and in *The Great Fire of*

London, seems to come to terms with Dickens. He is the giant precursor, whose power and example must, by paradox, inspire and frighten. In his last "inter-chapter" he recounts a dream of Dickens, in which, having completed the arduous task of writing the life, the biographer meets his subject and asserts, "I knew that it truly was Charles Dickens. That, in some sense, he had not died"—a dream reconciliation between the writer who concealed and the writer who reveals. Ackroyd had in his earlier "interview" of himself asked if he really understood Dickens and answered by leaving the judgment up to the reader.

It seems to me that the reader's response lies in his reaction to Dickens's novels. We will either read Dickens or we will not. The order form for the Oxford complete works lies filled out before me. In these terms Ackroyd's biography is a complete success.

election Sunday of November 29, 1987, and the brutal assault on parishioners at St. Jean Bosco are all recounted from Aristide's perspective. In each of these cases, Aristide is able to cull a resurrection hope out of the clutches of death. Indeed, Haiti has survived on that hope. On the other hand, his harsh criticisms of Haiti's bishops and of the "cold country to the north" might appear unfortunate, given his current position. But the criticism had to be leveled and must be understood in light of the crucible that Haiti has been through.

The foreword by Amy Wilentz provides an excellent overview of the period and insightfully introduces Aristide. Wilentz acknowledges the pivotal role of the Haitian church in the downfall of Baby Doc and uncovers the leavening role of the slight, intense Salesian priest. She indicates the "political symbiosis" between Aristide and Haiti's poor. "It is the symbiosis that has allowed Aristide's detractors, among them the church hierarchy, to assert that he is 'leading' his congregation in an unacceptable direction. In fact, no one is leading in this complicated relationship."

The important test now for President Aristide is precisely whether he can lead and at the same time hold onto the "political symbiosis" he has with his people. He must shift from being the fiery proclaimer of the word to being the policy formulator and implementer. So far, and in spite of the unfortunate but understandable carnage in the aftermath of the Roger Lafontant coup attempt prior to Aristide's inauguration, the new president has made the shift with grace and acumen. Indeed, the president has preached nonviolence and has promised only to try to lead Haiti from "misery to poverty." His inauguration speech on February 7 called for a "marriage" between the Haitian people and the Army but did not waver in asking for the discharge of six of the eight commanding generals—vestiges of the old guard. Indeed, Bishop Laroche, president of the Haitian episcopal conference, in his moving tribute at the *Te Deum* Mass, likened "*cher Père Aristide*" to Moses leading the Haitian people out of a desert of suffering.

The Washington Office on Haiti has indicated a few of the major planks in the new president's program. They include:

DEATH & RESURRECTION IN HAITI

IN THE PARISH OF THE POOR

Writings from Haiti

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, translated and edited by Amy Wilentz

Orbis Books, \$10.95, 112 pp.

John P. Hogan

After the brutal murders and burning at St. Jean Bosco Church on September 11, 1988, the message went out in Haiti: "*Yon jou, dife makout boule Pawol Renmen-an—Pou—Chak jou, dife Renmen-an boule raisin makout*" ("One day, the ton-ton macoutes burned the Word that we love; now, each day, the Word that we love burns out the roots of the ton-ton macoutes"). And indeed out of the attempt to assassinate the Reverend Jean-Bertrand Aristide at St. Jean's there emerged the future president of Haiti. On December 16, 1990, over 67 percent of Haitian voters elected *Pé Titid*, the fiery preacher of the

Word and defender of street kids and liberation theology, who had subsequently been drummed out of the Salesians for his outspoken criticism both of Duvalierism and the Haitian bishops.

With the publication of *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti*, North Americans get a glimpse of Haiti's president. The bulk of the text is taken up with a long letter to colleagues in the Latin American church. The letter is vintage Aristide but provides a hint of his later modest, to-the-point campaign. "You know how hard it is to build Utopia on a garbage heap, indeed, it is hard to build even a decent poor man's home there. But that is all we ask, a decent poor man's home, and no more corruption, no more inflicted misery, no more children bathing in sewage." The letter gives a stark overview of some of Haiti's history but especially of the years since Jean-Claude Duvalier fled. The killings at Fort Dimanche, the massacre at Jean Rabel, the ambush of Aristide and the other activist priests at Freycineau, the bloody

a grassroots, self-help development strategy involving NGOs and PVOs; efforts to scrap the Interdiction Agreement signed by President Ronald Reagan and Jean-Claude Duvalier; a new agreement with the Dominican Republic covering Haitian sugar cane workers; efforts to arrest and prosecute human rights abusers and corrupt officials. In addition, Haiti's justice system, tax laws, minimum wage laws, and land tenure system all need critical examination and new legislation.

Three factors will affect any reforms the new government tries to implement: the constant threat posed by ton-ton macoutes and the Duvalierist remnant, especially to Aristide himself; the need to garner some support from the business and upper classes; and finally, the need to coax (and use efficiently) support and assistance from the United States and other donor nations.

In response to such formidable tasks, Aristide has surrounded himself with strong and capable cabinet members, all of whom are light years ahead of Haiti's recent political figures. For once, Haiti has leaders Haitians can trust.

There is an irony to Bishop Laroche's glowing tribute and indeed to the very fact that an outspoken Catholic priest has been elected president of Haiti. Just as Aristide

emerged from the ashes of St. Jean's, his campaign movement emerged from the apparent failure of numerous church movements. Albert O. Hirschman, the development economist, has recently used an analogy to describe the plight of local development efforts. Hirschman says that although a project or movement may die out, this "social energy" becomes active again but in a different form; he calls this phenomenon the principle of conservation and mutation of social energy. It seems perfectly applicable to current events in Haiti. Aristide's election was the result of a "renewal of energy" of many suppressed or aborted efforts. The struggles of the Haitian Conference of Religious, the old *Radio soleil*, Mission Alpha, various Caritas projects, the Papaye Peasant Movement, *Tet Ansamn* groups, and the *Ti Legliz* all came alive within the network that put Aristide in the presidency.

In the Parish of the Poor aptly illustrates Hirschman's analogy. However, Aristide and the Haitian people—who together live within the constant shadow of death—would describe the apparent suppression of their movements and the subsequent renewal of energy in terms of the Paschal Mystery. Once again, death has been overcome by resurrection. □

nation, and the rising tide of nationalism and resentment of British domination. While *Palace Walk* is principally set in the old neighborhood of narrow streets, coffee houses, stands of snack and drink vendors, and lattice-work balconies protecting women from the public sphere, *Palace of Desire* opens out and becomes a social study that encompasses the drawing rooms of merchant princes, the boulevards of the new part of town, and the challenges to Ahmad's small world of comfortable compromise. When the third volume appears next year in English, Mahfouz's chronicle will have reached World War II, the conflicts of liberated grandchildren, and the issue of communism in Egypt.

The title, *Palace of Desire*, refers to the alley where Yasin, Ahmad's grown son by his first marriage, has his household and conducts his updated, ironically presented version of the well-lived life, in his case a clumsy parody of the father's more discreet philandering. The young man—an "ox" to his adroit father—has damaged the family reputation by divorcing in a messy way and threatening family connections and dignity. Mahfouz makes him the most obvious victim of passion, a comic loser who moves from scandal to scandal.

The younger children and their mother Amina, a woman sequestered from the world and yearning to please the master of the house, fill out the family picture. As the chronicle resumes in this volume—a self-contained, entirely clear story by itself—we are reminded of the aspirations of son Fahmy, a young law student killed in a nationalist protest in *Palace Walk*. His ardor and idealism are passed on to his brother Kamal, a philosophy student whose desires distill the modern humanist program of political liberation, scientific progress, sustaining love, and beauty in the arts. While the father's coarse pleasures take on a pathetic aspect as he chases a young singer and keeps her on a houseboat on the Nile, Kamal pursues cosmopolitan Aida, a Proustian heartbreaker who comes from the upper middle class and represents the unattainable. (Mahfouz, known for his admiration of Proust, offers interior monologues of Kamal's unrequited love and self-loathing that read like heavy-handed imitations of Charles Swann's agonies.)

LIFE ALONG THE NILE

PALACE OF DESIRE

Naguib Mahfouz

Doubleday, \$22.95, 422 pp.

David Castronovo

This grand-scale novel of Cairo life in the 1920s—weighing in with the heft and detail of a nineteenth-century chronicle—is the second part of Nobel laureate Mahfouz's family trilogy about the middle classes between the wars. The books were first published in 1956-57, but are still news to most of us. They are copious reports

from the Arabic world given humane depth and artistic harmony by a tolerant, witty, urbane observer of small scenes and large patterns. The first volume of the trilogy, *Palace Walk*, focuses on Ahmad al-Sayyid, a prosperous retail merchant whose tyrannical domestic regime, decorous business life, and late-night pleasures with cronies and lute girls provide the narrative with its tensions. A man with an infinite capacity for compartmentalizing and rationalizing, he bullies his way through life using custom, bits of the Koran, and his personal magnetism to keep things in order.

The second installment situates the rogue-patriarch against the background of deteriorating traditions, filial insubordi-

Meanwhile Kamal's sisters have done the socially correct thing by marrying the elite Shawkat brothers, two lazy ciphers. Aisha is a slender, pliable girl who tolerates the domination of the wizened widow Shawkat; her plump sister Khadija—an assertive, caustic, insightful young woman—wants to be an autonomous self, a woman with her own kitchen within her mother-in-law's household. Mahfouz raises the in-law joke to an art form as he stages battles over who knew the recipe for Circassian chicken first and who is most deferential to an old lady. His treatment of the fat-thin issue is worthy of a French structuralist (one with a good prose style like Claude Levi-Strauss); it's a complicated debate about power, femininity and masculinity, the outward signs of inner worth and substance, the traditional order and progress. Altogether Mahfouz has a magnificent command of the customs and manners that add up to a culture and a people's desires.

This book's coloration and variety are achieved with grace and ease. You move through the pages, relishing the diversity and hardly realizing that you're contending with a bulky monster of a narrative. In creating his discrete Cairo scenes—the elegant or noisy or sordid quarters of the city, the conversations during Amina's coffee hour, or the patrician banter at Aida's parents' gazebo—Mahfouz employs the classic, orderly articulation of the storyteller who knows his people inside out. There are no ellipses or experiments, just the familiar interior musings of characters who seem to think in bursts of emotion or rhetorical flights. This book, to be sure, has little to do with the techniques of the literary modernists. It is as clear and shrewd as the accounts of people's lives given by an inspired and trustworthy raconteur in a cafe. Mahfouz himself goes to his favorite cafe regularly to talk politics and listen to gossip.

Yet while the reader is on familiar Balzacian ground, it should be added that the ground is sometimes rather flat and predictable. The ideas as advanced by Kamal—about Darwin, nihilism, self-determination—are curiously dated. Mahfouz only brings philosophical issues to life if they are worldly or political. The exiled politician Sa'd Zaghul, a dynamic nationalist,

is made into a powerful symbol of thwarted ambition, a counterpoint to the frustration in private lives. Aida's brother is an image of decadence, a brilliant emblem of those whose values are Ottoman and detached from Egyptian national identity.

When the novel examines states of consciousness, metaphysics, and the history of ideas, it is sententious. Mahfouz is better on collisions than on musings. It's the wit, irony, and rich sense of incongruity in life that make *Palace of Desire* an important novel of civilization. Mahfouz has per-

formed a great service to world literature by offering such a complexly ambivalent view of people. In our present period of vaguely focused curiosity and thinly veiled distrust of the Islamic mind and self, Mahfouz satirizes and analyzes without reducing the humanity of his characters. A splendid scene toward the end—with Ahmad recovering from a stroke and receiving visits from his pals and neighbors, the crude and ascetic—shows Mahfouz's gift: "They almost seemed like slivers of his heart." □

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THE NEW MEDICINE AND THE OLD ETHICS

Albert R. Jonsen

Harvard University Press, \$18.95, 171 pp.

Howard Spiro

Life and death issues have overwhelmed modern clinicians for more than technological reasons. Medicine has become a more universal calling than in the 1940s, open to a far wider variety of people. To the Christian and Jewish camps have been added physicians of Muslim, Buddhist, and other heritages. Moreover, hospitals which were once the parochial hold of Catholics, Protestants, or Jews have become far more open than before. The old absolutes may not have toppled, but it is not easy in a democratically secular profession which believes only in what it can see to get agreement on important issues, particularly at the extremes of life.

Albert Jonsen, quondam Jesuit, leads a department of medical history and ethics, and is a widely influential professional ethicist. In an earlier book with Stephen Toulmin (*The Abuse of Casuistry*, reviewed in *Commonweal* August 10, 1990) he helped restore casuistry to dignity, emphasizing to physicians how much our "case-approach" method resembles that of medieval theologians. Now he has written what he calls an "Aggadah, 'A magical rabbinic mode of thought in which myth, theology, poetry, and superstition robustly mingle.'" Others might have called this learned discourse a prolegomenon, for Jonsen seems to be leading us to new and far-ranging considerations in medical ethics. Wittgenstein somewhere contrasted the broad avenues of the "new science" with the cramped meandering alleyways of the "old science." Jonsen adopts the architectural metaphor, suggesting that the institution of medicine is built atop a fault like his native San Andreas rift, shaken

from time to time by earthquakes.

The "old ethics" of his title refers to competence, professional ability, the "mastery of data and method." The new ethics, so he believes, may involve the limits of competence, how much can be done, and for whom, and when. There lies the fault line. Ethics must now look at the limits of technology, and Jonsen rightly asks doctors to learn more about the meaning of technology and its impact on human life and institutions. More learned from discussions with colleagues like Jonsen, the physician at the bedside must face the limits of what can—and should—be done for a particular patient.

Alas, Jonsen sometimes seems to want the doctors of the new ethics to view patients as "representative of a class." In abandoning the trappings of the old order of simple mastery, I hope he does not want us physicians facing a patient to think too much of those who will follow. He may have too quickly joined in the current hubris of medical statistics and controlled clinical trials. When Jonsen asks that doctors be "gatekeepers" as well as caretakers, basing decisions on statistics, he may have more faith in numbers than many doctors who are skeptical about the variability of our control trials, or at least of their interpretation. The explosion of knowledge is unrelenting, and who knows what new evanescent certainties will grip us doctors next year, for a year or two? Fortunately, he recognizes that clinical calculations are "in the realm of probability" and are not simply mathematical. Furthermore, data analysis is a subjective art, as any reader of the medical literature will know. Similarly, when Jonsen states, "competence now extends beyond the care of the presenting patient," I hope he does not mean that doctors should become double-agents, working for government as well as for patients. For the larger values of equity Jonsen is rightly concerned about are best secured by doing what is "reasonable" or "proportionate" for the patient before you.

The New Medicine has fine and wise

chapters on the beleaguered "fortress" of medicine, and on why doctors feel so set upon. Having watched and worked with doctors for twenty years, Jonsen spots our personal weaknesses, from substance abuse to marital failure, from isolation to suicide. The strain between self-interest (and I would add the entrepreneurial ethos foisted upon doctors by business metaphor and tradesman culture) and the altruistic ideals of the profession sometimes leads to collapse, he avows. He traces the personal ills of many physicians to such conflicts.

In the end Jonsen wisely turns to ambiguity. He would urge doctors to read more literature to understand their patients, and more history to understand themselves and to recall their perennial values. Memory, alas, seems to have gone from modern medicine—yesterday is already yesteryear, and the 1980s represent the distant past. Jonsen endorses more openness in medicine, less rigidity about methods of practice, fewer restrictions on those whom doctors ought to have conversations with, and more. All this will be difficult. Uncertainty remains the great tormentor of physicians who search always for certainty. "Fuzzy around the edges" may challenge the molecular physicist, but it blinds the physician bedazzled by the hard edges of the CAT scan.

In asking us to look at our past if we want to look at our future with any kind of morality, Jonsen would lead physicians back to the grand old questions we have come to ignore. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" deserves at least a

REVIEWERS

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HOWARD SPIRO, M.D. is a professor of medicine at Yale University and director of the humanities and medicine program. He is the author of *Doctors, Patients, and Placebos* (Yale).

thought. He would have doctors read more, think more, and rejoin society as more than technicians. History and philosophy, he says (and I would add novels and stories), will make for better balanced doctors and for more prudent medical practice.

When earthquakes relieve the strains of the San Andreas fault, old buildings may collapse. But edifices can be structured to survive even in Santa Cruz if their architects respect new knowledge. Jonsen is one of those builders whose new ideas provide reinforced concrete for the medical tower. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 386)

age more, Solesmes has just published a Latin/English *Gregorian Missal* for the revised liturgy. It was a pastoral gesture, not part of the research and publication of the official books directed by Vatican II. Retailer religious goods stores are marketing the missal as a pastoral tool. The first edition sold out in eight weeks.

JOSEPH O'CONNOR

Media study misread

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I am grateful to *Commonweal* for the quantity of attention given to the study "Media Coverage of the Catholic Church" and for printing the address at which copies may be obtained ["Thinskinmed," May 17]. That said, however, I must also say that your editorial seriously misrepresents "Media Coverage" and contributes little to discussion of the issues with which the study deals....

Your editorial finds fault with the results of the study on several grounds. In particular, it attributes to the study three "statements of fact" with which it disagrees.

The first statement is: "The mass media image of Catholics is only slightly better than that of the Nazis." But this statement appears in the study as a quotation attributed to a Catholic antidefamationist. It is clear in context that it is cited to *illustrate* one point of view. Although your editorial speaks of "evident agreement" on the part of the study's authors, they (appropriately)

express neither agreement nor disagreement.

The second statement to which the editorial objects is: "The church is overwhelmingly portrayed [in the media coverage analyzed] as an oppressive or authoritarian institution." "Media Coverage" does present this as one of its findings. What is one to make of it?

Your editorial challenges the finding on methodological grounds. Only 115 of 1,876 stories (five percent of the sample) dealt with the church in the terminology of

oppression and liberation (with 98 coming down on the oppressive side). This is said to be too few to show that the church was "overwhelmingly" depicted in a negative light.

That misses the point. The study's finding is that, in 98 of 115 stories in which the question of characterizing the church in terms of liberation and oppression rose at all, the church was painted as oppressive. That the rest of the sample was composed of coverage affording no opportunity to

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rate the church on the oppression-liberation scale is irrelevant. And if 98 stories out of 115 is not an “overwhelming” majority—what is?

The third statement is: “On most controversies involving Catholic teachings, the church comes out on the losing side of the debate as reported in the media.” The editorial complains that this equates church teaching with “official positions” and that the ratio of favorable to unfavorable evaluations varied from issue to issue—and on a few issues actually tilted in favor of the church.

The first objection—equating Catholic teaching with official positions—opens up an ecclesiological argument which has vexed the church for at least the past twenty-five years; we are unlikely to settle it here and now. More to the point, as S. Robert Lichter, principal author of the study, has noted, the study takes this view because it is the view adopted by the media themselves: Catholic teaching *is* the “official” teaching, disagreements with that teaching *are* dissent. Perhaps the media are wrong; but, if so, it is not the job of social science researchers to set them straight on ecclesiology.

The second object (ratio of favorable to unfavorable evaluations) also misses the point. What is the point? “Media Coverage” expresses it this way: “How could the balance of opinions tilt against the church despite the media’s extensive reporting of church teachings and reliance on the hierarchy as sources of information? The answer directs our attention to the structure of the coverage. Controversial issues were frequently presented as conflicts between the church hierarchy, on one side, and lower-level clergy, lay Catholics, and non-

Catholics, on the other.” In other words: The magisterium *vs* everybody else. Whatever else one makes of it, such coverage is not an accurate reflection of the real-life spread of opinion either inside or outside the church.

I have gone into this much tedious detail (while resisting the temptation to go into more) for a simple reason. “Media Coverage” is one of the first serious attempts—perhaps *the* first—to take an objective look from the viewpoint of social science at a phenomenon about which, up to now, we have all been treated to many more opinions than facts. Neither the authors nor the sponsors of the study regard it as a last word. Yet it is a creditable first step and it would be more helpful to discuss its findings than attempt to undermine them by misreadings and irrelevant arguments.

Commonweal’s editorial acknowledges the existence of “a real problem” in the media treatment of the church. Its suggestions for responding deserve to be taken seriously, as does its repudiation of simplistic media bashing. Those interested in a more positive approach would do well to start with the careful analysis embodied in “Media Coverage.” Your editorial describes it as part of the problem; it isn’t—but I very much fear the editorial is.

RUSSELL SHAW

The writer is director of the office of public information of the Knights of Columbus, a sponsor of the study.

The editors reply:

Our editorial did not “disagree” with three statements of fact in “Media Coverage of the Catholic Church.” Rather, it argued that the “facts” did not hold up. To wit:

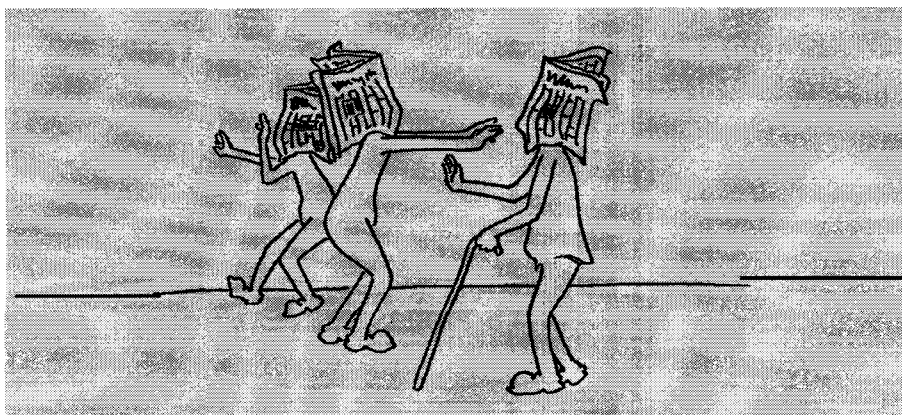
1. From the context, Mr. Shaw says, it’s clear that “Media Coverage” cited the statement we quoted about Catholic and Nazi images only to illustrate one point of view. Here is some of the context:

“In theory, the Catholic church is now more able than ever to compete for the hearts and minds of Americans within an atmosphere of religious tolerance. Yet Catholic antidefamation organizations complain of a continuing bias that is all the more corrosive for its apparent lack of self-consciousness. As Michael Schwartz writes in *The Persistent Prejudice*, ‘Hostility to the Catholic church functions as the unspoken premise for a good deal of what passes for the intellectual and cultural life of contemporary America.’ Citing numerous examples of popular entertainment portrayals of Catholic clergy and doctrine, Schwartz concludes: ‘Catholicism is represented alternatively as ridiculous or cruel and oppressive.... The mass media image of Catholics is only slightly better than that of Nazis.’”

We still think that last statement is, let us say, nonfactual, not to say paranoid; and, in our reading, it is cited with approval.

2. No matter how you do the math, the study “proves” that the church is “overwhelmingly” shown as oppressive on the basis of 98 out of 1,876 stories. Mr. Shaw argues that since there were only 115 stories in which the church was portrayed as *either* oppressive or liberating, the media score is bad. But he ignores the 1,778 other stories that did not depict the church as oppressive. And he skips over our analysis of how the study detected anti-church bias. As example we cited the very first news story used by the study’s authors to show their method, a piece in the *New York Times* reporting a Vatican decision to impose silence on the Rev. Matthew Fox. We quoted enough of the story to show, first, that if there was any bias in it the victim was not “the church” but Fox; and, second, that the bean-counting approach used in the study was mechanistic, wooden, and inappropriate. We would have expected Russell Shaw, himself a seasoned journalist, to see the same basic flaw.

3. Mr. Shaw says we complained that the study “equates church teaching with ‘official positions.’” Not so. “Ecclesiologically,” we wrote, “the assumption under-



lying the study identifies 'the church' [emphasis added] solely with certain official positions or attitudes." In this reading, the church speaks only when the hierarchy or the Vatican speaks.

It's a basic mistake, but a natural one, for the media to make this identification. It's a more serious mistake for a study of the media under Catholic auspices to adopt the same assumption. To see why, apply it to preconciliar and postconciliar reporting

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of debate on Catholic teaching about religious liberty. Without taking a sample, it's about 97 percent certain that in U.S. secular media coverage of debates on the topic before Vatican II, "the church" (as implicitly defined in the study) "came out on the losing end" of the debate; that is, Catholics and others who disagreed with official church teaching on religious liberty got more space and probably more favorable treatment than those who defended it. But then—on December 7, 1965—Vatican Council II issued *Dignitatis humanae*, its "Declaration on Religious Freedom." We think (and Russell Shaw probably agrees) that the church came out on the winning end that

day. Which is to say, John Courtney Murray, along with other dissenters, was speaking the mind of the church, understood as the whole people of God with all the sources of Christian belief at their disposal, before the church, understood as the hierarchy or the magisterium, knew its true mind.

That's why, in our opinion, it's wrong for a study of media coverage of things Catholic to assume that researchers can establish bias against the church by comparing the number of times that quoted sources support or criticize official teachings. The real church is bigger, and messier, than is dreamt of in the philosophy of the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

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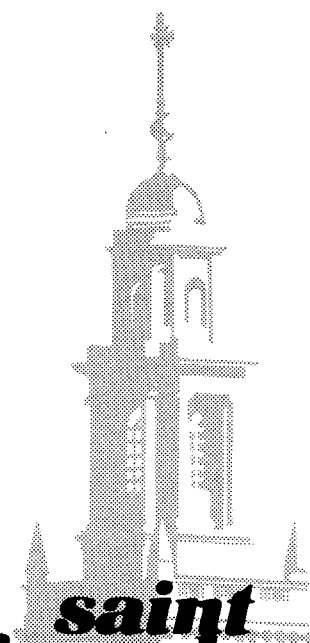
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